

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Gerald Abraham's *Essays on Russian and East European Music* was published in 1985.
 Barry Barnes is Reader at the Science Studies Unit, University of Edinburgh. He is the author of *T. S. Kuhn and Social Science*, 1982.
 David Blackburn is Reader in Modern History at Birkbeck College, University of London. His *Populists and Puritans: Essays in modern German history* will appear later this year.
 Philip Brady is Reader in German at Birkbeck College, University of London.
 Michael Butler is Head of the Department of German Studies in the University of Birmingham. His *The Plays of Max Frisch* was published last year.
 A. S. Byatt's *Sugar and Other Stories* was reviewed in the TLS of April 10.
 Lesley Chamberlain's *Food and Cooking of Russia* was published in 1982.
 Valentine Cunningham is a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. His *Spanish Front: Writers on the Civil War* was published last year.
 Malcolm Deas is a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford.
 Norman Fruman is Professor of English at the University of Minnesota. He is the author of *Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel*, 1982, and is preparing an edition of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.
 Peter Graves is a lecturer in German at the University of Leicester. He is the editor of *Three Contemporary German Poets: Wolf Biermann, Sonja Kirsch, Reiner Kunze*, 1985.
 Martin Kane is a lecturer in German and European Studies at the University of Kent, Canterbury. His *The Limits of Commitment: A study of George Grosz and Ernst Toller* will be published in the summer.
 G. S. Kirk is Regius Professor Emeritus of Greek at the University of Cambridge. He sailed in the Aegean as a member of the Levant Schooner Flotilla in 1944-5.
 Klemens von Klemperer is Professor of History at Smith College, Massachusetts.
 Robert Knight is preparing a book on British policy towards Austria in 1945-50.
 Michael Meyer's biography of Ibsen was published in 1971. His biography of Strindberg will be reissued in a paperback edition in July.

Stephen Mills's natural history television series *Nature in its Place* was shown on Irish television in 1985.
 J. Mordaunt Crook's *The Dilemma of Style: Architectural ideas from the picturesque to the post-modern* will be published later this year.
 Fidelity Morgan is an actress, and the author of *A Woman of No Character*, 1986, which will appear in a revised paperback edition in June.
 Blake Morrison's *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper and Other Poems* is published this week.
 Peter Nallor is Professor of History and Dean of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich.
 Lucy Newlyn is a Fellow of St Edmund Hall, Oxford. She is co-editor of *Coleridge's Imagination: Essays in memory of Peter Laver*, 1985, and the author of *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion*, 1983.
 John Pletcher is a Fellow of St John's College, Oxford. His edition of Bacon's *Essays* appeared in 1983.
 Patrick Renshaw is Senior Lecturer in American History at the University of Sheffield, and the author of *The Wobblies: The story of syndicalism in the United States*, 1967.
 Michael Rosen is a lecturer in Philosophy at University College London. His *Hegel's Dialectic and its Children* was published in 1982.
 Colin Russ is a lecturer in German at the University of Kent.
 Lorna Sage is a lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.
 Richard Shannon is the author of *Gladstone*, the first volume of which was published in 1982.
 Paul Snowden is a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford.
 Piotr Sommer is poetry editor of *Literatura Swiecia* (World Literature). He has published several collections of poetry in Poland. His *Antologia Nowej Poczty Brytyjskiej* (Anthology of New British Poets), containing his translations into Polish, appeared in 1983.
 Hew Strachan is a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. His most recent book is *From Waterloo to Balaclava: Tactics, technology, and the British army*, 1985.
 J. J. White is Reader in German at King's College, London. He is the co-editor of *Musil in Focus*, 1982.
 Iain Boyd Whyte's most recent book is *Die Briefe der Glasernen Kette*, 1986.

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561, 563, 565, 567, 569, 571, 573, 575, 577, 579, 581, 583, 585, 587, 589, 591, 593, 595, 597, 599, 601, 603, 605, 607, 609, 611, 613, 615, 617, 619, 621, 623, 625, 627, 629, 631, 633, 635, 637, 639, 641, 643, 645, 647, 649, 651, 653, 655, 657, 659, 661, 663, 665, 667, 669, 671, 673, 675, 677, 679, 681, 683, 685, 687, 689, 691, 693, 695, 697, 699, 701, 703, 705, 707, 709, 711, 713, 715, 717, 719, 721, 723, 725, 727, 729, 731, 733, 735, 737, 739, 741, 743, 745, 747, 749, 751, 753, 755, 757, 759, 761, 763, 765, 767, 769, 771, 773, 775, 777, 779, 781, 783, 785, 787, 789, 791, 793, 795, 797, 799, 801, 803, 805, 807, 809, 811, 813, 815, 817, 819, 821, 823, 825, 827, 829, 831, 833, 835, 837, 839, 841, 843, 845, 847, 849, 851, 853, 855, 857, 859, 861, 863, 865, 867, 869, 871, 873, 875, 877, 879, 881, 883, 885, 887, 889, 891, 893, 895, 897, 899, 901, 903, 905, 907, 909, 911, 913, 915, 917, 919, 921, 923, 925, 927, 929, 931, 933, 935, 937, 939, 941, 943, 945, 947, 949, 951, 953, 955, 957, 959, 961, 963, 965, 967, 969, 971, 973, 975, 977, 979, 981, 983, 985, 987, 989, 991, 993, 995, 997, 999, 1001, 1003, 1005, 1007, 1009, 1011, 1013, 1015, 1017, 1019, 1021, 1023, 1025, 1027, 1029, 1031, 1033, 1035, 1037, 1039, 1041, 1043, 1045, 1047, 1049, 1051, 1053, 1055, 1057, 1059, 1061, 1063, 1065, 1067, 1069, 1071, 1073, 1075, 1077, 1079, 1081, 1083, 1085, 1087, 1089, 1091, 1093, 1095, 1097, 1099, 1101, 1103, 1105, 1107, 1109, 1111, 1113, 1115, 1117, 1119, 1121, 1123, 1125, 1127, 1129, 1131, 1133, 1135, 1137, 1139, 1141, 1143, 1145, 1147, 1149, 1151, 1153, 1155, 1157, 1159, 1161, 1163, 1165, 1167, 1169, 1171, 1173, 1175, 1177, 1179, 1181, 1183, 1185, 1187, 1189, 1191, 1193, 1195, 1197, 1199, 1201, 1203, 1205, 1207, 1209, 1211, 1213, 1215, 1217, 1219, 1221, 1223, 1225, 1227, 1229, 1231, 1233, 1235, 1237, 1239, 1241, 1243, 1245, 1247, 1249, 1251, 1253, 1255, 1257, 1259, 1261, 1263, 1265, 1267, 1269, 1271, 1273, 1275, 1277, 1279, 1281, 1283, 1285, 1287, 1289, 1291, 1293, 1295, 1297, 1299, 1301, 1303, 1305, 1307, 1309, 1311, 1313, 1315, 1317, 1319, 1321, 1323, 1325, 1327, 1329, 1331, 1333, 1335, 1337, 1339, 1341, 1343, 1345, 1347, 1349, 1351, 1353, 1355, 1357, 1359, 1361, 1363, 1365, 1367, 1369, 1371, 1373, 1375, 1377, 1379, 1381, 1383, 1385, 1387, 1389, 1391, 1393, 1395, 1397, 1399, 1401, 1403, 1405, 1407, 1409, 1411, 1413, 1415, 1417, 1419, 1421, 1423, 1425, 1427, 1429, 1431, 1433, 1435, 1437, 1439, 1441, 1443, 1445, 1447, 1449, 1451, 1453, 1455, 1457, 1459, 1461, 1463, 1465, 1467, 1469, 1471, 1473, 1475, 1477, 1479, 1481, 1483, 1485, 1487, 1489, 1491, 1493, 1495, 1497, 1499, 1501, 1503, 1505, 1507, 1509, 1511, 1513, 1515, 1517, 1519, 1521, 1523, 1525, 1527, 1529, 1531, 1533, 1535, 1537, 1539, 1541, 1543, 1545, 1547, 1549, 1551, 1553, 1555, 1557, 1559, 1561, 1563, 1565, 1567, 1569, 1571, 1573, 1575, 1577, 1579, 1581, 1583, 1585, 1587, 1589, 1591, 1593, 1595, 1597, 1599, 1601, 1603, 1605, 1607, 1609, 1611, 1613, 1615, 1617, 1619, 1621, 1623, 1625, 1627, 1629, 1631, 1633, 1635, 1637, 1639, 1641, 1643, 1645, 1647, 1649, 1651, 1653, 1655, 1657, 1659, 1661, 1663, 1665, 1667, 1669, 1671, 1673, 1675, 1677, 1679, 1681, 1683, 1685, 1687, 1689, 1691, 1693, 1695, 1697, 1699, 1701, 1703, 1705, 1707, 1709, 1711, 1713, 1715, 1717, 1719, 1721, 1723, 1725, 1727, 1729, 1731, 1733, 1735, 1737, 1739, 1741, 1743, 1745, 1747, 1749, 1751, 1753, 1755, 1757, 1759, 1761, 1763, 1765, 1767, 1769, 1771, 1773, 1775, 1777, 1779, 1781, 1783, 1785, 1787, 1789, 1791, 1793, 1795, 1797, 1799, 1801, 1803, 1805, 1807, 1809, 1811, 1813, 1815, 1817, 1819, 1821, 1823, 1825, 1827, 1829, 1831, 1833, 1835, 1837, 1839, 1841, 1843, 1845, 1847, 1849, 1851, 1853, 1855, 1857, 1859, 1861, 1863, 1865, 1867, 1869, 1871, 1873, 1875, 1877, 1879, 1881, 1883, 1885, 1887, 1889, 1891, 1893, 1895, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1903, 1905, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1913, 1915, 1917, 1919, 1921, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1933, 1935, 1937, 1939, 1941, 1943, 1945, 1947, 1949, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2025, 2027, 2029, 2031, 2033, 2035, 2037, 2039, 2041, 2043, 2045, 2047, 2049, 2051, 2053, 2055, 2057, 2059, 2061, 2063, 2065, 2067, 2069, 2071, 2073, 2075, 2077, 2079, 2081, 2083, 2085, 2087, 2089, 2091, 2093, 2095, 2097, 2099, 2101, 2103, 2105, 2107, 2109, 2111, 2113, 2115, 2117, 2119, 2121, 2123, 2125, 2127, 2129, 2131, 2133, 2135, 2137, 2139, 2141, 2143, 2145, 2147, 2149, 2151, 2153, 2155, 2157, 2159, 2161, 2163, 2165, 2167, 2169, 2171, 2173, 2175, 2177, 2179, 2181, 2183, 2185, 2187, 2189, 2191, 2193, 2195, 2197, 2199, 2201, 2203, 2205, 2207, 2209, 2211, 2213, 2215, 2217, 2219, 2221, 2223, 2225, 2227, 2229, 2231, 2233, 2235, 2237, 2239, 2241, 2243, 2245, 2247, 2249, 2251, 2253, 2255, 2257, 2259, 2261, 2263, 2265, 2267, 2269, 2271, 2273, 2275, 2277, 2279, 2281, 2283, 2285, 2287, 2289, 2291, 2293, 2295, 2297, 2299, 2301, 2303, 2305, 2307, 2309, 2311, 2313, 2315, 2317, 2319, 2321, 2323, 2325, 2327, 2329, 2331, 2333, 2335, 2337, 2339, 2341, 2343, 2345, 2347, 2349, 2351, 2353, 2355, 2357, 2359, 2361, 2363, 2365, 2367, 2369, 2371, 2373, 2375, 2377, 2379, 2381, 2383, 2385, 2387, 2389, 2391, 2393, 2395, 2397, 2399, 2401, 2403, 2405, 2407, 2409, 2411, 2413, 2415, 2417, 2419, 2421, 2423, 2425, 2427, 2429, 2431, 2433, 2435, 2437, 2439, 2441, 2443, 2445, 2447, 2449, 2451, 2453, 2455, 2457, 2459, 2461, 2463, 2465, 2467, 2469, 2471, 2473, 2475, 2477, 2479, 2481, 2483, 2485, 2487, 2489, 2491, 2493, 2495, 2497, 2499, 2501, 2503, 2505, 2507, 2509, 2511, 2513, 2515, 2517, 2519, 2521, 2523, 2525, 2527, 2529, 2531, 2533, 2535, 2537, 2539, 2541, 2543, 2545, 2547, 2549, 2551, 2553, 2555, 2557, 2559, 2561, 2563, 2565, 2567, 2569, 2571, 2573, 2575, 2577, 2579, 2581, 2583, 2585, 2587, 2589, 2591, 2593, 2595, 2597, 2599, 2601, 2603, 2605, 2607, 2609, 2611, 2613, 2615, 2617, 2619, 2621, 2623, 2625, 2627, 2629, 2631, 2633, 2635, 2637, 2639, 2641, 2643, 2645, 2647, 2649, 2651, 2653, 2655, 2657, 2659, 2661, 2663, 2665, 2667, 2669, 2671, 2673, 2675, 2677, 2679, 2681, 2683, 2685, 2687, 2689, 2691, 2693, 2695, 2697, 2699, 2701, 2703, 2705, 2707, 2709, 2711, 2713, 2715, 2717, 2719, 2721, 2723, 2725, 2727, 2729, 2731, 2733, 2735, 2737, 2739, 2741, 2743, 2745, 2747, 2749, 2751, 2753, 2755, 2757, 2759, 2761, 2763, 2765, 2767, 2769, 2771, 2773, 2775, 2777, 2779, 2781, 2783, 2785, 2787, 2789, 2791, 2793, 2795, 2797, 2799, 2801, 2803, 2805, 2807, 2809, 2811, 2813, 2815, 2817, 2819, 2821, 2823, 2825, 2827, 2829, 2831, 2833, 2835, 2837, 2839, 2841, 2843, 2845, 2847, 2849, 2851, 2853, 2855, 2857, 2859, 2861, 2863, 2865, 2867, 2869, 2871, 2873, 2875, 2877, 2879, 2881, 2883, 2885, 2887, 2889, 2891, 2893, 2895, 2897, 2899, 2901, 2903, 2905, 2907, 2909, 2911, 2913, 2915, 2917, 2919, 2921, 2923, 2925, 2927, 2929, 2931, 2933, 2935, 2937, 2939, 2941, 2943, 2945, 2947, 2949, 2951, 2953, 2955, 2957, 2959, 2961, 2963, 2965, 2967, 2969, 2971, 2973, 2975, 2977, 2979, 2981, 2983, 2985, 2987, 2989, 2991, 2993, 2995, 2997, 2999, 3001, 3003, 3005, 3007, 3009, 3011, 3013, 3015, 3017, 3019, 3021, 3023, 3025, 3027, 3029, 3031, 3033, 3035, 3037, 3039, 3041, 3043, 3045, 3047, 3049, 3051, 3053, 3055, 3057, 3059, 3061, 3063, 3065, 3067, 3069, 3071, 3073, 3075, 3077, 3079, 3081, 3083, 3085, 3087, 3089, 3091, 3093, 3095, 3097, 3099, 3101, 3103, 3105, 3107, 3109, 3111, 3113, 3115, 3117, 3119, 3121, 3123, 3125, 3127, 3129, 3131, 3133, 3135, 3137, 3139, 3141, 3143, 3145, 3147, 3149, 3151, 3153, 3155, 3157, 3159, 3161, 3163, 3165, 3167, 3169, 3171, 3173, 3175, 3177, 3179, 3181, 3183, 3185, 3187, 3189, 3191, 3193, 3195, 3197, 3199, 3201,



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Contents

Alan Brinkley: Reagan's public fantasies 534-6
Hawthorne, cunning correspondent 553-4
Elaine Showalter on 'The Passion of Ansel Bourne' 537
Nicholas Hiley: government and M15 539-41
Survival of the Yezidis 543
'The Hairy Ape': human nature 551, 544-5

AMERICA 535-7, AMERICAN LITERATURE 552-4, AMERICAN POETRY 557, ANCIENT GREECE 546, BIOGRAPHY 538, BRITISH POLITICS 539-41, FICTION 558-9, GEOLOGY 560, JAPAN 542, HISTORY 560, MIDDLE EAST 543, MUSIC 564, PHILOSOPHY 544-5, SOCIAL HISTORY 547

ALAN BRINKLEY
ELAINE SHOWALTER
MARY LEFKOWITZ
LOUIS SIMPSON
NICHOLAS HILEY

Garry Wills: Reagan's America - Innocents at home 534-6
Michael G. Kenny: The Passion of Ansel Bourne - Multiple personality in American culture 537
Joyce Antler: Lucy Sprague Mitchell - The making of a modern woman 538
The Colonialist - Mares for a life (poem) 538
David Hooper: Official Secrets - The use and abuse of the Act
Richard V. Hall: A Spy's Revenge
Nigel West: Molehunt - The full story of the Soviet spy in M15
Anthony Clee: The Secrets of the Service - British Intelligence and Communist subversion 1939-51
Chapman Pincher: Traitors - The labyrinths of treason 539-41
Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi: Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-Modern Japan - The 'Ten Theses' of 1825 542
Brian Moser: Okubo Diary - Portrait of a Japanese valley 542
David E. Kaplan and Alec Dubro: Yokuzo - The explosive account of Japan's criminal underworld 543
John S. Guen: The Yezidis - A study in survival 543
J. Budziszewski: The Resurrection of Nature - Political theory and the human character
Stephen D. Hudson: Human Character and Morality - Reflections from the history of ideas
Christopher J. Berry: Human Nature 544-5
Richard F. Teichgraber III: 'Free Trade' and Moral Philosophy - Rethinking the sources of Adam Smith's 'Wealth of Nations' 545
Bernard Sergent: Homosexuality in Greek Myth. L'homosexualité en littérature dans l'Europe ancienne 546
Christian Habicht: Pausanias' Guide to Ancient Greece 546
Anne Carson: Eros the Bittersweet - An essay 546
James C. Davis: Rise from Want - A peasant family in the Machine Age 547
Reminders 548
Letters on Change in the Soviet Union, Civil War in Angola, 'Writing Culture', etc 549

CHARLES DUNN

CARMEN BLACKER
LESLEY DOWNER
ROBERT IRWIN
DAVID MILLER

JOHN ROBERTSON

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"Canvassing for a Vote or Candidate Electioneering", 1851-2, reproduced from The Paintings of George

Caleb Bingham by E. Maurice Block (296pp, University of Missouri Press, £47, 0 8262 0461 9)

Invitations to a sinless world

Alan Brinkley

GARRY WILLS
Reagan's America: Innocents at home
472pp, Doubleday, \$19.95.
0385 18286-4
To be published in the UK by Heinemann on
January 8, 1988.

Americans are not the only people, surely, who try to inhabit a moral universe essentially unrelated to the realities of their world. But Americans are, perhaps, more preoccupied with their own sense of themselves than the peoples of other societies - more obsessed with defining their national "character", exposing their national "myths", exploring the vagaries of their national "soul". There are now at least three generations of scholarship examining the belief in American "innocence", celebrating or (more often) lamenting the conviction that America has a special destiny, that it is insulated from the normal workings of history. Implicit in most such discussions is the assumption that if only Americans could free themselves from the stifling burden of their own mythology, they might learn to behave more responsibly and effectively at home and in the world.

That America has a national mythology, and that many Americans choose to believe it, is hardly open to doubt. But to what degree does that mythology affect the way people actually behave? Does the moral universe many Americans like to think they inhabit determine their actions, or does it simply provide a comfort for those who do not want to face the reality of their world? That is one of many intriguing questions that arise from Garry Wills's intelligent and immensely provocative effort to explain the meaning of Ronald Reagan - and through him the meaning of America.

Wills's thesis is, on the surface at least, deceptively simple, and to those familiar with his earlier work (most notably, his influential *Men of Letters* 1969), even predictable. Reagan is a reflection of how Americans wish

to see themselves, an almost uncanny embodiment of the nation's myths and self-deceptions. He has become so, moreover, not through a cynical manipulation of public appetites. Reagan himself genuinely believes the fantasies he promotes. He has reinvented his own past and has come to believe in the reinvention. In the same way, he has re-created the nation's past and has persuaded the American people to believe in that re-creation as well. But however sincere Reagan's beliefs may be, they are the product of wish not reality. They are a fantasy woven to protect himself, and the nation, from the disturbing intrusions of the world as it is. And because they serve to shape not only rhetoric but action, they are immensely dangerous.

Much of *Reagan's America* consists of reasonably conventional (and very skilful) biography, indeed one of the most extensive and thoroughly researched accounts of Reagan's pre-presidential life yet to appear. But it is a highly and deliberately selective account, shaped less by the actual course of events than by Reagan's own interpretation of them. At times, in fact, Wills seems principally interested in offering a critical discussion of a text: Reagan's own autobiography of 1966, ghost-written by Richard G. Hubler and originally published under the title *Where's the Rest of Me?* (a line from one of Reagan's films). Political autobiography is by definition a self-serving and even deceptive genre, and Reagan's is no exception. Wills, however, reveals a pattern here that suggests something more than the normal political impulse to soften the rough spots and hide the mistakes. Time and again, Reagan has distorted or simply invented events in ways that contribute less to biding his own faults than to hiding those of the world around him.

Reagan's childhood, he claims in his autobiography, was "one of those rare Huck Finn-Tom Sawyer idylls". Mark Twain's novels, Wills points out, are not "idylls" at all, but "chronicles of superstition, racism, and

crime". Reagan's allusion, however, is less to the realities of the literature than to the popular mythology widely if wrongly associated with it - the image of a simple, innocent world of small towns and river boats and self-reliant, enterprising individualists. Yet Reagan remembers his childhood as inaccurately as he remembers Twain's novels; his own life was no more carefree or idyllic than Huck Finn's. The warm and comforting family he portrays was, in fact, rootless and often troubled. His father, a Roman Catholic, was an unsuccessful salesman increasingly befogged by alcoholism; his mother was an intensely religious Protestant, who immersed her son in the life of her faith and appeared with him in church plays. The happy youthful activities Reagan recounts occurred in the context of recurrent family tensions, frequent moves from one community to another, long hours spent in low-paid and exhausting jobs, and an apparently constant (if unspoken) yearning to escape his small-town Midwestern world for something larger and more glamorous.

Reagan's first real break with his provincial background came not in college (he went to a remote denominational institution closely tied to the small-town Protestant world he had always known), but after, when he worked for several years as a sportscaster for various Midwestern radio stations. Reagan learned his trade from the example of such accomplished myth-makers as Graham McNamee and Grantland Rice - the leading figures in a generation of sports journalists to whom accuracy was far less important than colour and uplift. Reagan was a success as a broadcaster because he was a success at creating appealing fantasies and making effective use of anecdotes. Even before he arrived in Hollywood, therefore, he had become adept at filtering reality through the lens of his own or his audience's wishes.

But what better place to refine that ability than in the world of illusion into which Reagan moved in 1937 and where he lived for nearly thirty years? Even more than today, the film

stars of the 1940s and 1950s - dependent as they were on the whims of powerful studios and their publicity departments - played assigned roles not only on the screen, but in their lives. It must have been extraordinarily difficult for any actor to identify the point at which public fantasy ended and private reality began; indeed the annals of Hollywood are filled with tragic stories of men and women destroyed by their inability to live with that uncertainty.

Reagan seems to have had no trouble at all. He happily co-operated with the studio image-makers and seems, in the end, actually to have believed in the identity they created for him. During the Second World War, for example, Reagan was ineligible for combat duty because of his poor eyesight. Instead, he accepted an honorary commission in the Air Force and spent the war years making films (*Rear Gunner*, *For God and Country* and others) designed to raise public morale. He was rarely away from Hollywood. But the studio public-relations offices and the fan-magazines told another story. Reagan was a "soldier", like other soldiers, leaving his wife (Jane Wyman) and children to go "off to war". Feature stories described Wyman bravely "carrying on", raising the family and maintaining the household while her man was "away". Newsreels and magazine photos depicted touching reunions, when Reagan "came back" for leaves and visits.

The deception was, perhaps, harmless enough in itself. But Reagan seemed unable to accept it as the publicity ruse it was. Even decades later, he liked to talk about "coming back from the war", like other veterans, eager to take up family life again (a life that in his case had never been interrupted). To this day, he refers at times to scenes from war films (his own and others) as real events from his own past. Or he simply makes up events altogether, as a studio publicist might have done in 1945. He told Yitzhak Shamir in 1983 of his experience as part of a crew filming Nazi death camps

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at the end of the war – a story so touching that both the President and the Prime Minister later repeated it. It was completely false. Reagan had never been near the death camps, as the White House later admitted (just as he has never visited Nicaragua but once shouted in response to pro-Sandinista hecklers in Europe, "They haven't been there. I have.") Such stories, Wills argues, are told not so much to deceive as to exhort and uplift. They are efforts to give "images for morale and inspiration", to give "a pep talk" to the country. They are Hollywood's preoccupation with myth-making and illusion transferred to the White House, evidence of a general lack of interest in separating truth from desire.

Reagan has, at times, even reinvented his own inventions: not just his life, but his parts in films. He recalls his role as an irresponsible wastrel in *King's Row* as his finest performance; but he describes the pathetic character he portrayed in terms utterly incompatible with the real message of the film. He refers frequently to George Gipp, the Notre Dame football player he once played whose premature death figures importantly in *The Knute Rockne Story* and who has since entered the pantheon of "heroes" Reagan likes to invoke. But only in the cinema was George Gipp a hero. The real "Gipper" was a vicious and dissolute libertine, largely responsible for his own death. Reagan was successful in Hollywood as an actor in light romantic comedies, a genre for which his gentle, amiable personality was ideally suited. But he prefers instead to remember himself as the star of rugged westerns, in which he was a conspicuous failure.

Reagan's vision of his own past intersects with and reinforces a vision of American society at large. Both are the source of moral verities; both are essentially inaccurate. The Illinois of his childhood, as he portrays it, is a Norman Rockwell landscape, stable, pious and homogeneous. In reality it was a rough, turbulent, rapidly growing region troubled by violence, racism and frequent personal failure. He is, he likes to believe, the product of a time and a place in which self-reliant individuals helped America to grow and flourish without assistance from or interference by the government. In fact, his various home towns – like much of the nation – experienced their most important growth as a direct result of government subsidies for canal and railroad building; his own family survived the Great Depression largely by virtue of the jobs his father received from New Deal relief agencies. "If we seek Ronald Reagan's roots", Wills writes,

we shall not find them in a "land made great because it was free from big government". Rather, the land grew by the influence of a government that was itself growing in the extraordinary effort at incorporating the whole West. . . . Much as he tried to deny it, Ronald Reagan was enmeshed in the arms of government.

Later in life, he was cradled in the arms of a tough corporate conglomerate: the talent

agency MCA, which in the 1950s used heavy and, some believe, illegal pressure to drive competitors out of business and establish a virtual monopoly over large segments of the film industry. Reagan was President of the Screen Actors' Guild during the period of MCA's most rapid and ruthless expansion; his own agent was a power in the company; and Reagan apparently used his influence with his union to help MCA's rise to dominance. (In return, MCA managed to rescue Reagan's then failing career.) But the example of MCA – which has done more than any other organization to limit opportunities for individual entrepreneurs in the film industry, which has been almost continually under investigation by the Justice Department for decades, and which almost got Reagan himself indicted in the early 1960s – has done nothing to weaken Reagan's faith in the essential beneficence of private industry. Some critics (most notably Dan E. Moldea, author of a recent "expose" of Reagan's involvement with MCA and MCA's with organized crime) have seen evidence in all this of fundamental dishonesty. Wills takes a different, if scarcely more flattering view. It is evidence of Reagan's remarkable ignorance and naiveté, his uncanny ability to see the world as he wishes it to be: "Reagan was generally favorable to business as such, which he contrives to think of as an individual rather than a social activity. He was always prepared to think the best of his own bosses."

To Wills, Reagan's apparently willful ignorance of his own life and world are signs not only of a personal but a national trait, what he describes as the American doctrine of "original sinlessness". And to those familiar with Wills himself and his own earlier work, it should come as no surprise that he sees that doctrine as the key to a great cultural malady. A self-proclaimed conservative, a pious Catholic, Wills believes in the idea of "the Fall", in the inherent corruption of human nature, in religion as a vehicle for man's struggle to earn deliverance from the sickness of his soul. But Americans, he argues, have derived from their evangelistic history the dangerous belief that they are somehow exempt from sinfulness. They have attempted to transcend corruption not in the next world (as traditional Christianity prescribes) but in this. They have made of religion something not redemptive but therapeutic. "The earlier myth", he writes, "called for a repenting awareness of sin. The later one calls for a dutiful innocence and optimism."

Ronald Reagan – in his war on pessimism, self-doubt and the idea of limits – is the authentic voice of one of the deepest yearnings of the American soul: the desire to deny sin, to escape history, to achieve perfection in this world. And he has become that voice because he is himself "so energetic a believer in the counter-myth to the Fall". As such, he has helped Americans to strike

a tacit bargain with each other not to challenge Reagan's version of the past. The power of his appeal is the great joint confession that we cannot live with our real past, that we not only prefer but need a substitute. Because of that, we will believe in all his stories.

In fact, Wills argues, America's greatest need is for precisely what Reagan denies it: an awareness not of past myths, but of past reality. "A sense of identity", he writes,

is based on the experience of endurance through shifting circumstances; and since all actual situations up to the present were, by definition, past situations, identity always has to be sought in the past. That is why continuing scrutiny of the real past is so important to human growth.

Wills has written a remarkable book – erudite, impassioned, imaginative, often brilliant. Up to a point, moreover, his argument is not only powerful but persuasive. It helps make comprehensible some of Reagan's own most conspicuous characteristics: his detachment from the day-to-day affairs of government, his obliviousness to detail, his appalling ignorance of basic facts, his penchant for anecdotes, and his easy shifts back and forth between reality and fantasy. It explains, too, some of the reasons for Reagan's remarkable personal popularity. He does embody America's fondest ideas of itself. He does invite the nation to ignore its past flaws and present dilemmas, to enter a genial haze of self-congratulation. But what effect does all this have on the way

Americans actually behave, either individually or collectively? What effect does it have on public policy? Wills suggests that the effect is paralysing, that it renders society incapable of dealing effectively with its problems or of experiencing real "human growth". That, however, is an assumption for which he offers little evidence. And it is an assumption that cannot be accepted on faith. A case could be made, in fact, that the myths and delusions that Wills so ably chronicles and that Reagan so skillfully employs have had almost no effect at all – either on Reagan's own policies or on the nation's collective behaviour. The evidence Wills himself presents here could support such an argument in countless ways: Reagan's career in Hollywood, this book makes clear, was not the dreamy idyll he now likes to remember. It was a series of pragmatic adjustments to changing circumstances, motivated not by ideology and wish but necessity. Reagan's two terms as Governor of California, Wills admits, were surpri-



singly conventional. Ideology may have helped him win election (although the unpopularity of his opponent was at least as important). But only briefly did myths and symbols play any important role in the way he actually ran the government. His record, according to a reporter who covered him in Sacramento, was "moderate and responsible but undisturbed."

And what of Reagan's record in the White House? Wills devotes only thirty-five pages of this long book to the Reagan presidency, perhaps because his discussion of it does very little to support his larger argument. Reagan's initial victory in 1980, he concedes, was far more a result of Jimmy Carter's unpopularity and the dismal state of the economy than of Reagan's skill as myth-maker. His re-election victory four years later likewise owed more to the economic recovery than to America's regained innocence.

Wills tries to argue that Reagan's economic policies – with their simplistic faith in the market, their reliance on tax cuts and budget adjustments to stimulate growth, their willingness to tolerate unprecedented deficits – are a product of the President's naive wishfulness. Supply-side theory "fit[s] everything he believed about the American saga, about what 'made us great' before there was any government to cripple the loose pioneer on the frontier". But Reagan was, as Wills admits, a late convert to the supply-side doctrine. The original inspiration for it came not from romantic myth-makers, but from hard-headed right-wing economists and corporate figures interested in tax relief. The idea gathered considerable political (and even some academic) support long before Reagan tried to fuse it with his own ideological message. Wronghheaded as the supply-side doctrine might be, it is grounded in economic theory, past practice, and self-interest – not simply in fantasy and wish.

Wills is perhaps most eloquent and least convincing in describing the aim of Reagan's "Star Wars" programme – a technological fantasy presented to the public as a benign "final solution" to the threat of nuclear war and the threat of

war. The project, Wills writes, "fulfills Reagan's narrative requirement that a single hero (or hero-nation) save the day by decisive act What is Star Wars but another, more complex project meant to trace, in lasers and benign nuclear 'searchlights,' the image of America itself across the widest screen of all? In fact, Star Wars can more readily be portrayed as nothing of the kind: as the effort of researchers and industrialists to secure lucrative contracts, as an attempt by the military to respond to the perceived Soviet advantage in missile strength, as a ploy to produce a 'bargaining chip' for future arms-control negotiations. The programme, as it has so far developed, bears only a passing resemblance to the magical fantasy Reagan has attempted to present; it is at this point simply another potential ABM system for protecting missile sites. Nor is there evidence that Reagan's extravagant rhetoric has persuaded the public of the value of the project. In the one election in which Star Wars became a significant issue – the 1986 Congressional contest – the Republicans (and Reagan himself) suffered a staggering defeat; Democratic candidates had no reason to fear the wrath of voters when they opposed the Administration on this issue."

Wills completed his book before the current imbroglio over the sale of arms to Iran; and he cannot, of course, be expected to have considered events of which he had no knowledge. Still, the Iran controversy does little to support his argument that mythology determines political behaviour. It would be hard to imagine a more cynically pragmatic series of events than those that culminated in the Iran fiasco. And it is difficult to watch the public response – the dramatic drop in Reagan's popularity, the rapid unravelling of his image of invincibility – without developing doubts about the degree to which Reagan's presumably mythic appeal has ever a phenomenon divorced from the actual results of his policies.

It is possible to argue, in other words, that the exalted American self-image that Wills so effectively and devastatingly describes and that Reagan so lovingly embraces is little more than a rhetorical device, providing a palatable veneer for decisions and impulses grounded not in ideology but in self-interest. One could produce evidence to suggest that Reagan's popularity is only secondarily a result of his success at image-making and is primarily a result of his success (or luck) in presiding over a period of economic growth. One could make a persuasive case that the actions of his administration are consistently, even shamelessly, pragmatic – driven less by the President's naive world-view than by immediate political considerations.

Indeed, one could go further and argue that the belief that Americans are a myth-driven people, the belief that they have a unique ideology that determines much of what they do, may itself be a reflection of the nation's faith in its own exceptionalism. Even those who deplore the myths seem strangely transfixed by them, as unwilling to live without them as they imagine others are unwilling to live without devotion to them. And thus Wills's remarkable exploration of the national psyche (in this book and in others) may be as much a reflection of what it describes as an explication of it.

Yet to argue that an American ideology explains nothing but itself would be as misleading as to argue that it explains everything. It is true that when one examines particular decisions and specific actions, it is usually difficult to identify any clear role for the mythic structure Wills and others like to believe underlies them. But that structure surely exists. It is a pervasive feature of national culture and national identity. And at some level – a level that Gary Wills's otherwise impressive book does little to reveal – it almost certainly works to shape not just how Americans talk, but how they behave. Finding that point of connection is among the considerable tasks remaining to those who wish to define the "meaning" of America. *The State of America* by Trevor F. Fisher, first published in 1986, has now appeared in paperback (194pp. Faber, 0-571-14672-3, £3.95). As foreign correspondent of *The Times* based in New York, Fisher has travelled throughout the United States, and his book includes chapters on Alaska, Florida, Chicago

Trying to help themselves, themselves, themselves

Elaine Showalter

MICHAEL G. KENNY
The Passion of Ansel Bourne: Multiple personality in American culture
250pp. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press. \$24.95 (paperback, \$14.95). 0874745721

With Jekyll and Hyde in mind, we tend to think of the nineteenth century as the age of split personalities, doubles who solve their sexual and social problems by neatly dividing mind and body, good and evil, upstairs and downstairs. Dr Jekyll's pronouncement that "man is not truly one but truly two", could be the slogan of the Romantic and Victorian infatuation with duality. But even Jekyll foresaw that in the more complicated social environments of the twentieth century, two personalities might not be enough to get a man through the week, and that a single body would have to shelter a host of "multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens" which shared the ever-increasing burden of multiple social roles.

In the United States, according to this study by Michael Kenny, a social anthropologist at Simon Fraser University, mere duality always seemed insufficient to accommodate the competitive and contradictory ambitions of an expanding nation; Americans eager to be all that they could be split into multiple selves that in some recent cases have numbered as many as a hundred mutually amnesiac "personality fragments". Kenny views the phenomenon of multiple personality as an American "idiom of distress", a socially produced syndrome born of Puritanism, evangelical religion, changes in women's roles, and financial stress. Focusing on famous medical cases, he also includes religious converts and spiritualists among his five major case histories, exploring the different contexts, whether theological or medical, in which their symptoms were defined.

The nineteenth-century American selves Kenny assembles are indeed a curious bunch of mystics, mediums, spirit-rappers and trance-speakers, worthy of Henry James's *The Bostonians*. Four of the five subjects are women, for despite the male doubles of Victorian fiction, most of the medical accounts of multiple personality describe women acting out roles forbidden to females. Although Kenny makes only minimal connections to the histories of psychoanalysis or feminism, his book might well be read as a study of American female hysteria, a Yankee counterpart to Charcot's hysterical queens at the Salpêtrière

or to Freud and Breuer's cases in Vienna.

Ansel Bourne, the only male subject in the book, thus seems out of place as its titular figure, the more so because his story is relatively passionless and dull. (In the cover photograph, the high-domed Bourne looks already reversible, like one of those Victorian cartoons that becomes another face when you turn it upside-down.) He was a carpenter from Rhode Island who in 1857 had what was called a conversion experience, which struck him blind, deaf and dumb for eighteen days. Upon recovery he became an itinerant preacher; but in 1887, after struggling with a difficult second marriage, financial problems and religious doubts, he disappeared and was eventually discovered in Philadelphia, running a small business under the name of Albert John Brown. William James hypnotized him on behalf of the Society for Psychical Research, and his case became well known among psychologists, but in neither of his conversions is it very difficult to understand Bourne's recourse to an alternative self.

The women, however, are much more florid and inventive. Lenora Piper, for example, was a celebrated medium who resched the height of her fame in the 1890s. While she occasionally was taken over by the spirits of Longfellow and Bach, Piper's favourite control was an Indian maiden named Chlorine. Her downfall came in 1909 when she claimed to deliver messages from the deceased Richard Hodgson, a prominent psychical researcher who had often expressed the wish to hasten his death in order to set up spiritualist communications from Beyond. Mrs Piper's impersonation of Hodgson, according to William James, involved "so much repetition, hesitation, irrelevance, unintelligibility, so much obvious groping and fishing and plausible covering up of false tracks" that her reputation was shattered.

Kenny argues that she believed in her voices, but his discussion of her case would be more persuasive with reference to the work of Laurence Moore and Alex Owen, both of whom have analysed the way in which spiritualist mediumship gave silenced nineteenth-century women an alternative voice. While men had pioneered the field as prophets, by the late nineteenth century women had taken over as mediums in what became an alternative feminist religion, circumventing male clerical hierarchies and exploiting feminine "passivity" as a pipeline to the divine.

By the turn of the century, multiple personality had become the product of covert and emotional interactions between frustrated women and their doctors. The Freud of Boston

was Dr Monon Prince, a prosperous nerve specialist who treated two of the most famous cases, which Kenny discusses in his book. In *The Dissociation of a Personality* (1906), Prince wrote about Clara Norton Fowler, a twenty-five-year-old student of literature who came to him in 1898 with neurotic symptoms. Under hypnosis, she developed three personalities, which he called BII, BIII and BIV and thought of as the Saint, the Devil and the Woman. While BII was anxious, rigid and neurotic, BIII, who named herself "Sally Beauchamp", was vivacious, high-spirited and amoral. Sally was also openly enamoured of Dr Prince: "I love you always, you know always, but best when you are strong and splendid", she wrote to him. Prince's daughter recalled that when Sally "was too obstreperous, odours of ether would emerge from the office", as he attempted to "subjugate this mischievous nature". Despite Sally's wishes, Prince would not allow her to become the dominant personality; a unified "Miss Beauchamp" developed via hypnosis and after completing her treatment with Prince, she attended Radcliffe College and married another prominent Boston neurologist.

While the case of Miss Beauchamp was turned into a Broadway play by David Belasco, the case of "B.C.A." is far more compelling, even in the choppy, confusing and incomplete account Kenny has assembled from her autobiographical writings and her letters to Prince in the Harvard Medical Library. "B.C.A." (actually Nellie Bean) was a forty-year-old widow in 1898 when she first came to Prince suffering from depression, insomnia, headaches and odd behaviour. Like Clara Fowler, she was intellectual, literary and frustrated by the domestic submission enjoined by society. Her "multiple personalities" were all too clearly facets of her repression and her rebellion. "A" was morbid, helpless, prudish and terrified of living without a man. "B", however, was daring and independent. She wore white instead of widow's weeds, enjoyed "fun and a gay time", smoked, danced and flirted with men and even allowed one Mr Hopkins to kiss her. She was alarmed by "A"'s anxieties and by her schemes to remarry: "Why, if she got married I would be married too I suppose, and I won't. I can't."

Under Prince's treatment by hypnosis "C" emerged as a compromise personality which resolved these contradictions. Mrs Bean never remarried, but spent the remaining years of her life as Prince's devoted research assistant and typist. It seems a convenient resolution for Prince, and a prosaic fate for the Brontësis

"B", who had pleaded not to be cured into normality: "I am afraid I am going to be a woman just like A & C. I don't want to, Dr Prince I want to be just what I have always been – just 'B' free as the wind, no body, no soul, no heart. I don't want to love people because if one loves one must suffer – that is what it means to be a woman – to love and suffer."

In his final chapter, Kenny comments sardonically on the contemporary epidemic – or vogue – of MPD (Multiple Personality Syndrome). In 1984 an International Society for the Study of Multiple Personality was formed, with the celebrated "Eve" (formerly of the Three Faces) sitting on the Board; it now publishes a scholarly journal called *Dissociation*. A patients' advocacy group has its own publication, called *Speaking for Ourselves*. Bestsellers about MPD, such as Flora Rheta Schreiber's *Sybil*, share the racks with American self-help books like *How to Be Your Own Best Friend*; therapists treating MPD victims search for the "Inner Self Helper", who knows the other personalities, and can convene them as the chairman of a committee would. As the roles demanded of women increase, in these post-feminist days, so too do female personalities: by 1975, when her identity became public, "Eve" herself had "multiplied like rabbits", reaching a grand total of twenty-two and beating Sybil's previous record of sixteen. While not always spurious, Kenny believes, the phenomenon of multiple personality is always a response to cultural messages, and even created to a large degree by the psychiatric establishment (and its lunatic and occult fringes). Kenny doubtfully predicts that MPD has "indefinite growth potential" in *fin-de-siècle* America, where there is so much from which to be dissociated.

Unfortunately, Michael Kenny's own multiple academic personalities jostle for precedence throughout the book, making his narratives frustratingly hard to follow. A the anthropologist, B the biographer and C the cynic seem unaware of each other's presence, so that the same examples are reused to different purpose, while the book's tone and format change drastically from chapter to chapter. In lieu of an Inner Self Helper, a tough editor might have made these fascinating stories much more accessible.

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Superwoman and The Child

Mary Lefkowitz

JOYCE ANTLER
Lucy Sprague Mitchell: The making of a modern woman
436pp. Yale University Press. £30.
0300 036565

In the Wellesley College Chapel a gleaming white marble relief shows, with exquisite sentimentality, the college's beloved second president, young Alice Freeman, in an academic gown, gently pushing a younger woman onward to a distant goal; the younger woman holds a lamp to guide her in her quest for the truth. Miss Freeman left the Presidency in 1887 to marry a Harvard Professor, George Herbert Palmer, who, though unwilling himself to leave Cambridge, allowed his wife to spend twelve weeks each year as Dean of Women at the University of Chicago. There she met Lucy Sprague (1878-1967), who was to become one of Mrs Palmer's most influential protégées.

As a daughter of a prominent Chicago businessman, mostly rich by the standards of the time, Lucy had been expected to devote her adult life to the service of the family, either by marrying a man who might help to increase or preserve the family's wealth, or by remaining at home to serve as nurse to her parents. Her father, who spent most of his life slowly dying of tuberculosis, demanded the constant service of a female relative, since it would have been wrong to expose an outsider to contagion. But instead of spending her adult life emptying the cuspidors, Lucy insisted on being able to finish her secondary school education. After this she was rescued by the timely intervention of Mrs Palmer, who knew the family well, and assured Lucy's parents that their daughter could live with her in Cambridge while attending Radcliffe, the women's "annexe" of Harvard.

Although her family resented it, Lucy remained after graduation under the protection of the Palmers. When in 1902 Mrs Palmer suddenly died, Lucy rejected an offer of marriage from the self-important, yet curiously dependent Professor Palmer; then, after a period of wavering, she took the radical step of becoming the first Dean of Women at Berkeley; her mentor in this case was the President of that

university, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, who had met Lucy at the Palmers' house in Cambridge. During her time in California she met and, though only after much correspondence and indecision, married an Economics professor, Wesley Mitchell. Her departure from the deanship was marked by the enactment of a Parthenon, "The Spirit of Maidenhood", with a cast of almost 500 women, in a masque representing the ideals of American women's culture that she, with varying effectiveness, sought to achieve in her own life.

The Mitchells settled in New York, where Lucy's wealth and social position enabled her to combine home and career, with homes in the city and in the country, until her husband's death in 1948. As founder of an experimental bureau of education, a school for children, and as author of books on children, Lucy managed to make a lasting impression on primary schooling in America. By all accounts an inspiring teacher, she was of course a progressive, who abandoned the ordinary curriculum, and encouraged children to enjoy and participate in what they read; she wrote her own book of appropriate stories for children, without the envy and cruelty that characterize traditional tales. All her life she studied and recorded patterns of children's speech, and even in her sixties toured the country by bus in an attempt to show herself and her students its "human geography".

It is possible to discern from the great mass of biographical material here assembled from



Lucy Sprague Mitchell teaching a class at the Bank Street College of Education, taken from the book reviewed here.

letters, diaries and interviews by her perhaps too sympathetic and industrious biographer, a sense of the intellectual determination that propelled Lucy through life. She enjoyed

dressing in gypsy costume, and reading out loud to guests English versions of haunting Romanian ballads about loneliness, love and death. Many admired her, but not everyone liked her; her own children thought that she was more interested in The Child than in them as individuals. She loved her husband, but seemed from the beginning more interested in her own needs than in his, complaining in her early letters of his lack of "personality" and "masculinity"; Mitchell himself was perhaps more easily satisfied, since he claimed to see from union with his intelligent and independently wealthy bride "serene happiness and a sense of heightened efficiency".

The notion of the modern woman exemplified by Lucy Sprague Mitchell—daughter, educator, wife and mother—is impressive in the range of its accomplishment, but to many was terrifying to contemplate: what would she have done without her large inheritance? her husband's calm self-confidence? her own boundless energy and determination, and physical strength? Even with all these assets she remained throughout her life uncertain about the direction her work should take, and found herself unable to comfort members of her family who were seriously ill. Can a life like hers be lived, like the lives of many successful men, only at the expense of others, whose lives might arguably be less valuable to society? This question, posed by Mrs Palmer, evaded by Mrs Mitchell, remains unanswered in our own time.

The Colonial—Notes for a life by LOUIS SIMPSON

Among the legacies of a colonial culture is the habit of thinking of creative sources as somehow remote from itself. —F. O. Matthiessen

There is a beach with white sand
and big waves rolling in.
I am picking up seashells

of all colors and shapes . . .
pieces of flint, and the seeds called horse-eyes,
trying to gather them all.

This is the famous singer, Caruso
as a clown. Here he is again
as a soldier, with helmet and sword.

Here is the garden scene,
and this is the phantom ship,
and the woman dancing with her shadow.

Here is the one who looks like your mother,
"Pons as Lakme",
and again, as a blonde, "Lucia".

People still spoke of the Great War.
When they were travelling in Europe,
and visiting one of the trenches

she saw part of a soldier's uniform
in the trench, and picked it up.
There was a hand lying under it.

Aunt Edith and Aunt May
rocking and fanning on the veranda.
Now and then one of them speaks

something to do with the servants,
how stupid and lazy they are.
A tram goes by in the South Camp road

changing its bell. A John Crow
seems to hang from a cloud.
Trees rustle in the breeze from the sea

A bugle sounds in the distance.
"Charge for the guns!" he said,
and the battle of Waterloo

The man lying in bed
is my uncle. He used to be mayor,
but the most important thing

about Bertie is his leg.
I try to make out the place
where it should be. It's not everyone

who has lost a leg in an earthquake . . .
had a whole building fall on him
and lived to tell the tale.

When every head is bent diligently
over its prep, all of a sudden
there's the braying of a donkey

and we all turn around, knowing
what to expect . . . Johnny Maguire
risen from his desk, erect,

and waving it up and down.
"Ah cyan't read an ah cyan't write
but ah cyan multiply!"

The hurricane flooded the gully.
The body of a black man lay by the fence
covered with a sheet of zinc.

There is still a hollow place
where it used to be. By lamplight
the drowned man shines and breathes.

The waves . . . white lines of foam,
a steamer slowly turning
to go around Port Royal.

And I am waiting to go
and the wind and the rain
in the wind, and the rain rustling

Lifting the lid

Nicholas Hiley

DAVID HOOPER
Official Secrets: The use and abuse of the Act
1989. Secker and Warburg. £12.95.

NICHARD Y. HALL
Spy's Revenge
1989. Penguin. £3.95.

JOHN WEST
Molehunt: The full story of the Soviet spy in
1989. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.

JONATHAN GLEES
The Secrets of the Service: British Intelligence
and Communist subversion 1939-51
1989. Cape. £18.

CHAPMAN PINCHER
Follows: The labyrinth of treason
1989. Sidgwick and Jackson. £13.95.

The greatest mistake in the history of the British Secret Service was made on its foundation in October 1909, and its effects remain with us today.

At a time of acute rivalry with Germany, Lord George Macdonogh, the head of War Office section MOS, was given responsibility for organizing a new administrative bureau to coordinate both espionage abroad and counter-espionage at home. Following the recommendation of an earlier working party, he had created a highly secret organization, called the Secret Service Bureau, which ensured that in all covert operations Whitehall would not only be freed from the necessity of dealing with spies, but direct evidence could be obtained that we were having any dealings with them.

The Foreign Office thus got its wish for a system of spies which could be "disowned

when necessary", and, as Phillip Knightley has pointed out, Britain was provided with "an intelligence organisation that officially did not exist". However, the 1909 reorganization went even further than this. Conscious of the political risk from even indirect association with espionage, the Liberal government waived its right to close supervision of the Bureau in return for concrete results. It reviewed the arrangements after a short probationary period, but then Cabinet Ministers quite simply stopped asking what the Secret Service organizations were up to. In 1911, for instance, when the Germans arrested a British agent in Bremen, the Secretary of State for War calmly advised the Foreign Secretary that he could certainly make a request to the Bureau for details of the operation, but that "it may be best not to make it" if they were to deny all responsibility. The choice was simple, and the operation was duly disowned.

Nearly eighty years afterwards we are still living with the consequences of this political cowardice. Yet its results were not only inevitable but also obvious within a decade.

First, if a government department is permitted to operate in complete secrecy, without careful direction and without close supervision, it will naturally determine its own responsibilities. By 1916 the officers of the counter-espionage branch, by that time called M15, had extended their operations to the surveillance of pacifists, trade unionists and left-wing activists, entirely on their own initiative. They continued to develop their interception of correspondence, tapping of telephones, and recruiting of agents until, in 1917, one American liaison officer found it "almost impossible to get anything in writing as to the detailed working of any one of the various departments, for the reason that each Department has grown up very slowly around the personality of one man, and he has made his own rules".

Second, any government department which operates in such secrecy and with such autonomy, even in the matter of pensions and pro-

motion, will be peculiarly vulnerable to internal factions and rivalries. When these become acute, and because the rule of secrecy allows of no appeal, frustrated officials at all levels will seek to publicize their supposed grievances through contacts with friendly journalists. There is nothing either surprising or novel in this. As early as 1919 the civilian Director of Intelligence, Sir Basil Thomson, had begun leaking Special Branch papers and M15 reports to a former *Daily Mail* writer called Sidney Felstead, so that, to M15's disgust, they could be used in a book which magnified his role in wartime counter-espionage.

Finally, if the relationship between a government and its Secret Service consists in complete secrecy of operations on one side and complete freedom of dissociation on the other, then legal controls must quickly be found to guarantee this confidentiality. The basis of these controls remains an Official Secrets Act passed as early as 1911, and an advisory committee formed in 1913 to circulate editors with bulletins on the handling of sensitive subjects, now known as the "D-Notice" Committee. Given these simple relationships, which are built into the constitution of the British Secret Service, it is truly remarkable that the British public should continue to be surprised by their natural consequences.

Why, for instance, should we be shocked to hear that in the 1970s M15 enlarged its operations to include the Prime Minister's office, when this was a predictable consequence of its great autonomy? Why is there concern that officers of M15 and M16 frequently collaborate with writers such as Rupert Allason and Harry Chapman Pincher, when this form of public appeal is essential to the continuance of the Secret Service in its present form? How can people be surprised that legal action has been taken against the BBC over Duncan Campbell's *Secret Society* programmes, or against Peter Wright over his proposed book *Spycatcher*, when these pose such an obvious threat to the government's freedom of dis-

sociation from covert operations?

Part of the reason is surely the great poverty of theory in the criticism of secret affairs in Britain. David Hooper's new book, *Official Secrets: The use and abuse of the Act*, is unfortunately no exception. He takes as his subject all those sections of that infamous statute which do not specifically concern acts of espionage, and his narrative certainly makes interesting reading. The Official Secrets Act of 1911 and its amending Act of 1920 were initially applied in a bewildering variety of circumstances. We read, for instance, of a man prosecuted in 1935 who, "for reasons which one can only guess at", gave a false address in a lonely-hearts advertisement for the *Daily Telegraph*; of another man, convicted in 1943 of careless talk in a public house, whose occupation is given simply a "drinker"; of two Oxford undergraduates in 1958 imprisoned for three months after publishing an article in a student journal, concluding most sensibly that "the irresponsibility bred and sheltered by the Official Secrets Act is uncontrollable".

The history of the Act over its first fifty years in fact confirms the suspicion that it is peculiarly self-defining. The Under-Secretary of State for War managed to rush the original legislation through a virtually empty House of Commons one Friday afternoon in 1911, on the understanding that the government "were bound in honour not to employ the Act against editors or other persons connected with the Press". Yet within three years it was being used to threaten editors. In 1920 the Attorney-General promised that the new amendments, with their alarming extension of powers, would leave the press as free as before, but by 1930 they were being used to threaten journalists who published confidential material. In 1936 the same official stated that the 1911 Act could not be used in cases of accidental indiscretion, but within twenty years such prosecutions were commonplace.

During the 1960s there were indications that this indiscriminate growth might have stopped,

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and by 1972, in the wake of the failed *Sunday Telegraph* prosecution, the Franks Committee was even prepared to advocate measures to limit its application considerably. Their report helped to curb the more bizarre uses of the Act, but few people are now as confident as Mr Hooper that it marked "the beginning of the end for the Act". Even fewer will support his belief that an early repeal of the notorious Section 2, with its penalties for any unauthorized use of official information, might be accompanied "by a complete revision of the practice relating to secrecy". As he himself points out, "no previous Attorney-General has used Section 2 more than the present incumbent, Sir Michael Havers QC", a man whose eight years in the post have scarcely seen a lessening of enthusiasm for official secrecy.

Indeed, as his narrative continues to the present day it becomes clear that Hooper has chosen to fight on the wrong ground, for the Act is just one symptom of official secrecy. The secrecy itself contains many different strands. The first developed from the professionalization of the Civil Service in the second half of the nineteenth century, which fostered the concept of official ownership of official information. The second came in the rapid growth of the press and news reporting after 1880, which made that ownership seem under threat. Finally, after 1909, there arose a need for the government to protect its delicate relationship with the Secret Service.

All these elements existed before the passing of the Official Secrets Act of 1911 and, because British governments still cannot come to terms with the vast expansion of information in the twentieth century, they will endure long after it has gone. As a lawyer Hooper is satisfied to support "a statute that protected the secrets that really matter", which would be "severe in its application... but used only very sparingly", but how would that have influenced the Peter Wright case, for instance? Here the Official Secrets Act waits in reserve, but ahead of it march an injunction against his publisher, a law of confidence action against the man himself, another injunction against the *Guardian* and *Observer*, an action for criminal contempt under that injunction against the *Independent*, *London Daily News* and *Evening Standard*, and various interpretations of the sub judice rules to control discussion in the House of Commons. It is clear in retrospect that the Franks Committee simply forced governments to change their ground, and that the revision of official secrecy no longer depends on the revision of the Official Secrets Act.

This same feeling of digging in the wrong place grows as one reads Richard Hall's new "Penguin Special" covering the Wright case, *A Spy's Revenge*. Hall reported the trial for the *Guardian*, and his detailed account has this intense, close, exhausting air of a hot courtroom in the afternoon during a long trial. This works in its favour over some sections, and the book is full of interesting episodes, but the habit of never stepping back from the problem, and never opening out the debate, eventually stifles his argument. In particular, Hall abandons one of the central problems in this case of *Attorney General of the UK vs. Helmsmann and Another*. As the book's cover observes, the British government "stirred up a hornet's nest" in trying to silence this former MI5 officer, so the question naturally arises: "why were they so keen to stop the publication of Peter Wright's memoirs?" Hall unfortunately cannot solve this problem. He confesses that he does not know "why no compromise with Wright was possible", and can only suggest that it was avoided to "show the Americans that the British were better than them at keeping secrets". However, as he admits, this does nothing to explain the scale of the official campaign, which he believes involved stories planted in the London press by "government media minders", and an attempt to manipulate the *Daily Express* in support of an appeal.

There was a similar response from journalists in Britain, who agreed that the government must be taking action on behalf of MI5, either to prevent Wright from describing its problems in embarrassing detail, or simply to enforce its supposed tradition of honourable silence. However, all such explanations miss the vital point that the intelligence community, in its operations, has been the 1909 agreement, and thus threatens the British government's reputation of disavowal. The Wright case thus involves that political danger which every British government in the last eighty years has fought to contain, and the government was acting entirely in its own interest when it sent the Cabinet Secretary to the Wright trial, where he steadfastly refused to admit even that MI6 exists.

Hall's account of the trial supports this interpretation by revealing the strange history of Wright's 100,000-word manuscript *Spycatcher*. He presents Wright as a methodological technician, who retired from MI5 in 1976, "carrying the burden of the dislike, even hatred of many of his colleagues in MI5 and MI6", and with a pension of only £2,000 per annum. Wright campaigned for two years for a more generous allowance, but it remained as an apparent snub from his former employers. There is nothing new in this. In 1940, for instance, the Deputy Director of MI5 was sacked by Churchill, and granted a pension of only

£100 per annum. The Wright case thus involves that political danger which every British government in the last eighty years has fought to contain, and the government was acting entirely in its own interest when it sent the Cabinet Secretary to the Wright trial, where he steadfastly refused to admit even that MI6 exists.



Moholy-Nagy's "Superman" or the "tree of eyes", first published in *Haackebell's Illustrations* and taken here from Moholy-Nagy: Painting, photography, film by László Moholy-Nagy, translated by Janet Seligman (1950pp. Lund Humphries. £12.95. 0 85331 513 2).

£440, deliberately calculated from his army rank before joining the Security Service in 1912.

In 1978 Wright began the preparation of a dossier detailing the theories which he had about MI5, and attempted to bring it before the Prime Minister. This failed, and so he agreed to collaborate with the journalist Chapman Pincher on his book *Their Trade is Treachery*, published in 1981. When this relationship soured he turned to television, and finally agreed to collaborate with a ghostwriter on a book for publication. According to Hall this project became "a pulp for his analyses, theories, on the Russian threat to the West, the articulation of the beliefs of a persevering group within Britain's MI5 and MI6". It included speculations about the Soviet penetration of MI5, details of an MI5 operation, ten years before, which Wright described as "the plot to destabilise the Wilson government", and, finally, complaints about his pension. According to Mr Justice Powell, who has had to read it, the whole is presented "in a style which seems more appropriate to the *Boy's Own Paper* or *Biggles Flying Omnibus*". However, its publication would clearly have raised questions about MI5's ability to regulate its own affairs.

But to appreciate Wright's strange grievances more fully we must turn to *Molehunt: The full story of the Soviet spy in MI5* ("Nigel West" is Rupert Allason's pseudonym). West writes both clearly and interestingly. The book eventually founders in detail, but it carries the reader through the first fifty pages like a novel, and through the next hundred or so like a thriller. It is a number of strong, sharp, and often brilliant, observations on the operations of the intelligence community, and thus threatens the British government's reputation of disavowal. The Wright case thus involves that political danger which every British government in the last eighty years has fought to contain, and the government was acting entirely in its own interest when it sent the Cabinet Secretary to the Wright trial, where he steadfastly refused to admit even that MI6 exists.

to in the 1950s, and "would only appear on television wearing a pillow-case with eye-holes". Yet the book also reveals the unpleasant possibility which rucked MI5 for ten years during the 1960s and 1970s, and is even now burning in print.

This first developed in 1962, when the Russian defector Anatoli Golitsyn was interviewed in Washington by an MI5 officer named Arthur Martin. As Golitsyn expounded his grand theory of Soviet penetration of the West, Martin's suspicions hardened into a belief that there was treachery at the highest level in MI5. It is instructive to take subsequent events at their face value. The following year MI5's own Deputy Director-General, Colonel Mitchell, under intensive observation, in operation codenamed "Peters", he was asked to retire, but to the "Peters" team this belief only that he had been warned about treachery. They urged the Director-General of MI5, Roger Hollis, to allow them to interrogate Mitchell before his retirement, and, when he quite naturally refused, made Hollis himself the principal suspect. In 1964 they established an ultra-secret committee, codenamed "Euseby", under the chairmanship of Peter Wright.

This internal investigation quite simply frightened MI5, and the lack of effective political oversight meant that these factions could. The weight of available evidence would not be sufficient to make most people change their brand of soap powder, but Wright and Mitchell headed a group convinced that Hollis was guilty, and eagerly seized on the slightest affirmation. Most sources agree that Hollis was neither very clever nor imaginative, but he was a man of great energy and drive. He was shortly before his retirement in 1965, he was Wright into his office and asked "Why do you think I am a spy?" this immediately became evidence of his quite staggering stupidity. Eventually the deficiencies in the evidence themselves became evidence. In 1971 an assessment of Anthony Blunt's original confession judged it had been carefully fabricated to avoid naming new traitors, so that the false name Hollis could itself become a shocking indictment. These were the prejudices which were linked to Chapman Pincher for publication, and which have brought Richard Hall to urge that Wright's manuscript be published in order "that the arguments and thought processes of those behind Pincher could be brought into the open for scrutiny". However, the Hollis fiction has not been the only case of a venture into print.

As Nigel West reveals, Graham Mitchell was finally interrogated in 1965, but his replies were dismissed as "stock answers". In no acquiescence a group of retired and embittered MI5 officers eventually decided to publish their suspicions as "a comprehensive dossier in the guise of an apparently impartial history". They hoped that this project, ironically named "Worst Case", would break Mitchell's resistance if he could be "offered the opportunity to confess in return for a solemn undertaking that no word of his admission would be released until after his death". Allason generously lent his pseudonym to this filthy business, which resulted in the book *A Matter of Trust: MI5 1945-72*, published in 1982. This was sent to belabour Mitchell through ill-health to death two years later, but apparently Allason was unmoved by such matters, for he ends his book with the plaintive comment that his admission would have sufficed.

However, a third group of Secret Service officers has now sought to break cover with the careful exercise of damage-limitation. In the last section of his long and interesting study entitled *The Secrets of the Service: How Intelligence and Communist Subversion Were Exposed*, Anthony Glees reveals himself as a spokesman both for the Hollis family, and for a group of "senior officers in MI5 and MI6", who are "convinced that Roger Hollis was totally innocent of the charges made against him".

Dr Glees is a thorough historian who signals his evidence with great clarity. His section on Hollis, which is designed to clear his name, easily dismisses the Soviet allegations, and produces some new

about the warning sent to Donnell Maclean in 1951—a principal plank in the case against both Hollis and Mitchell. However the narrative quickly turns into an argument against the closer political oversight of MI5, which seems strangely out of place.

Glees believes that intelligence organizations are "good or bad" according to their efficiency of operation, and thus presents the current problem as "how can MI5's morale be restored?" We are assured that in most cases the bad press that MI5 has received is not its own fault, and that it springs from the recent "general lack of self-esteem" which has brought criticism for all Britain's great institutions. Glees admits that MI5 has probably been guilty of "excessive secrecy", but assures us that overall political control has always existed in the person of the Home Secretary of the day. All that is required, we are told, is the appointment of "an official spokesman" for MI5, the release of a set of "well-ordered" historical records to illustrate its past, and a better appreciation of the fact that MI5 "is, after all, the public's security service". In this way the secret policeman on the beat will apparently become the friendly figure he used to be, and "the liberal essence of British security work" will be preserved. But few people will be encouraged to follow Glees down this path. As David Hooper's book concludes, we have little reason to believe "that Whitehall will put its own house in order and that the citizen will be sufficiently protected by procedures voluntarily introduced by government departments". The problems which beset MI5 are rooted in too much secrecy, not too little.

It is instructive to look finally at the type of ideas which grows in the darkness of this official secrecy, through Chapman Pincher's new book *The Labyrinths of Treason*. Pincher presents this as a pioneering, theoretical study of double-agents and moles, but in fact his simple conviction that loyalty, patriotism and race are somehow inseparable has a long pedigree in the Secret Service. In a lecture written for Chief Constables in the 1920s Sir

Vernon Kell, Director-General of MI5 for thirty years, described his secret register of "half-hearted hybrids" and naturalized aliens "who have furtively but quite legally changed their foreign names by deed poll for the obvious purpose of concealing their foreign origin". In Kell's day the world remained conveniently divided between the British and "those who hammer at our gates", but for Pincher the battle has turned, the enemy is in the camp, and among the forces of order "there has never been treachery on such a scale".

Pincher reveals himself to be a close follower of Anatoli Golitsyn and Peter Wright, convinced that the strength of the West is being sapped by numerous subversives. At his trial Wright sought to expose the "fundamental weaknesses in British society", through which the British Establishment "was, en masse, penetrated by the Russians". He estimated that as many as 200 might remain, and so Pincher's new book aims both to foster "the resurgence of patriotism and national pride", and to train those loyal to the British government in the recognition of traitors. On our behalf he examines dozens of double-agents and traitors in an attempt to locate the mark of Cain which God has set upon them. Yet the common factor continually eludes him. Could it be social background? No, "traitors come from all walks of life". Could it be a quirk of handwriting? No, the range of styles "would seem to be too varied". Could it be sexual impotence? Or homosexuality — in which case we could locate them using women. "Who are usually perceptive in this respect?" Alas, probably not. Could it be a combination of "physical characteristics"? No, unfortunately, for "traitors come in all shapes and sizes". Indeed, all that Pincher comes up with is the curious information that habitual traitors walk in a funny way — "forever looking over their shoulders or taking other precautions, such as staring in shop windows, to ensure that they are not being followed". Yet beware, these could equally be habitual readers of Chapman Pincher.

However, despite its unconscious humour this mammoth catalogue of treason does illustrate the continuing importance of the concepts of loyalty and subversion to the political right. In a recent piece for the *Telegraph Sunday Magazine* Pincher described the force of his own patriotism. This, we learn, forms "an umbilical attachment" to Britain, and yet is clearly no more than a selective attachment to its inhabitants. As he makes plain, his fear of being "in any way subservient to aliens" includes coloured immigrants, who are after all "so different from me and mine", and it naturally extends to communists, following a sudden revelation in the 1930s "that, in the event of a successful revolution, Britain would first have to be governed from Moscow".

His new book adds to the list of those to whom he owes no loyalty. The typical Soviet "agent of influence", we discover, operates "under the usual fraudulent cover of being a 'peace-loving liberal'". Such people are established in our universities, our schools, "right down to primary level", and particularly in our news media, where they constantly criticize the United States. How does one detect their hidden bias as television commentators? — "one senses it". How does one detect their gloating after acts of terrorism? — "it can be imagined". Yet he reserves his special fury for "pacifists and civil libertarians". These people are beyond the pale not only because they "interfere with the nation's capabilities", but also because, according to Pincher, they openly support the Soviet Union — a significant statement, since he believes that all political activists working in support of a foreign country must be classed as traitors. To him these people are simply pawns of the Soviet *Spetsnaz* infiltration units, which, he informs us darkly, regularly practise attacks on a mock-up of 10 Downing Street. But surely the Prime Minister's office is ready for them? After all, it was warned about the danger over seventy years ago by Maurice Hankey, the future Cabinet Secretary, who noted that German aliens in London

would not require a very extensive organisation or very considerable numbers to attack the houses of nearly all Members of the Cabinet and of the principal Administrative Officers of the State. A good deal of harm could be done even at 10 Downing Street by half-a-dozen desperate men armed with knives or clubs, before sufficient force was available to dent with them.

Yet perhaps Pincher is right to worry — after all the contemporary Prime Minister remained "entirely unconvinced".

It seems what we need now is a thorough demystification of the Secret Service. A. J. P. Taylor began this process several years ago by identifying the fallacy where "a statement of fact in a secret document is regarded as necessarily truer and an argument as necessarily wiser than one made by a politician or journalist in public". As most matters of high policy depend on simple principles and common knowledge, he formulated "Taylor's Law", which states that "The Foreign Office knows no secrets". To this, one could add a further "law", stating that "At no time in history have the heads of the Secret Service been better informed than the Editor of *The Times*".

Indeed, all that needs to be done to demystify the Secret Service is to remember that its operation is no different from that of a newspaper, for it exists principally to collect, edit and circulate information. Its assessments are no more accurate than those of a newspaper, and its reports should be treated in just the same way, for they contain the same mixture of fact and fiction, spiced with self-interest. An attempt by MI5 to discredit a government is no more or less likely to succeed than an attempt by a newspaper, although both are disturbing. Newspaper contacts with politicians are no less manipulative than those of MI5, so why should Chapman Pincher talk of "parliamentary parties... penetrated by MI5"? And finally, when we have demystified the Secret Service, we can at last dismantle the disreputable bargain under which it has operated since 1909, and lift the repressive secrecy which that engenders.

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John Coile

Coping with the barbarians

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ROBTADASHI WAKABAYASHI
Anti-Forerunner and Western Learning to
Early-Modern Japan: The "New Theses" of
1825
343pp. Harvard University Press. £17.95.
0674 040252

On the fifteenth day of the second month of the eighth year of the Bunsei year period (which corresponds to April 3, 1825, in the Gregorian calendar, which the Japanese did not adopt until 1868), the *bakufu* (the Japanese Tokugawa government), as Bob Todashi Wakabayashi relates, issued its Expulsion Edict. An extract from his full translation of this reads: "whenever a foreign ship is sighted approaching any point on our coast, all persons on hand should fire on it and drive it off. If the vessel heads for the open, you need not pursue it; allow it to escape."

The earlier exclusion edicts had dated from the 1630s, and the usual account of them has been that they had established *sakoku* (national isolation) at this time, but Dr Wakabayashi points out that this term was coined only in 1801 and that previously exclusion had in fact been limited to the Spanish and Portuguese, in the shape of Christian missionaries, and to Japanese nationals leaving the country. It was due to the monopolistic activities of the Dutch (who had been allowed restricted trading with Japan since the early seventeenth century) that other Europeans did not come to her shores. The British had abandoned their efforts when the East India Company left for economic reasons in 1623, and when, in 1763, an English vessel (the *Return*) came to Nagasaki, which was the official port of entry, and requested permission to reopen trade, an originally favourable reaction from the authorities was reversed when the Dutch in the port malicious-

ly pointed out that the ruling families of England and Portugal were related.

Again, in 1792, a Russian embassy under Adam Laxman arrived in the northern island of Ezo (now Hokkaido) in an effort to have a port opened for trading. After some negotiation he was advised to present himself at Nagasaki in the following year and seems to have received the impression that this request would then be granted; while some Japanese castaways were exceptionally allowed to be repatriated. In 1793, however, the chief minister of the *bakufu*, Matsudaira Sadanobu, refused permission in a reply of which the last words (in Wakabayashi's translation) are "No foreign ship may call anywhere else besides Nagasaki. Our authorities at all other ports are instructed to destroy any foreign vessel that approaches shore." By this reply the minister had effectively established the doctrine of *sakoku*, claiming that its proscriptions had existed since ancient times. The Expulsion Edict of 1825 thus put into established legal form a more or less private reply to Laxman's request.

The year 1825 also saw the completion of the important work translated here under the title of *New Theses* but widely known even in the West by its Japanese name *Shinron*. Its author was a middle-ranking *samurai* of the domain of Mito, about 100 km north of Tokyo, by the name of Aizawa Seishisai (1781-1863). The lords of Mito were descendants of the first Tokugawa *shogun* and they had set up one of the various schools of neo-Confucianism which flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The most important function of those who worked in Mito was preparing a complete history of Japan, but this took a long time and men like Aizawa worked on many other projects, in particular with the problems arising from the effort of foreigners (especially Russians at this time) to gain access to Japan. Wakabayashi does not give much biographical information on Aizawa, but he does quote a revealing letter from the 1850s:

"In 1792, when I was at the tender age of eleven, the Russian barbarians arrived in northern Ezo. When Master Yūkoku [his tutor] told me about their fearsome, cunning nature, my blood began to boil and I resolved then and there to drive them away. I built an earthen statue of Laxman and derived great pleasure by lashing it with my riding whip. From then on I vowed to devote myself to learning."

New Theses was probably the most important product of this devotion and its constituents are entitled as follows: (i) What is Essential to a Nation (I, II and III); (ii) World Affairs; (iii) The Barbarians' Nature; (iv) National Defence; (v) A Long-Range Policy.

The word that is used in the title of the three parts of (i) is *kokutai*, a two-character compound which seems to have been used in China since Han times, and subsequently taken into Japanese as part of the huge China-derived section of the vocabulary of that rich language. Wakabayashi's translation seems to contain the essential meaning but it is typical of philosophical words derived from Chinese that over a period of time they acquire, in Japanese, a range of meaning which has to be expressed with various English equivalents in translation, even though the Sino-Japanese original remains unchanged as written and pronounced. The word *kokutai* has had several translations, such as "national fabric", "national prestige", "national polity" etc, and it played a considerable role in the nationalist currents that preceded and accompanied the Meiji Restoration in 1867, and continued to flow up to the end of the Pacific War, as indeed they still do, however sluggishly and as a minor trickle.

Aizawa's view of *kokutai* saw the Imperial Ancestress, the sun goddess Amaterasu, as the source of Japan's civilization and indisputable greatness. He particularly detested Buddhism and the "wicked doctrine" of Christianity. He saw the latter as the means by which foreigners

like the Russians, in alliance with other Christian nations, sought to undermine the authority of the Japanese rulers. He blamed the tolerance of the *samurai* lords for not keeping the foreigners, but admired Peter the Great for his patriotic achievements, as he did the Christian martyr Sidotti (who died in 1715) for the courage with which he defended Christianity against the influence of "barbarian" nations, since Aizawa resolutely refused to recognize any other purely spiritual motivation but that of the old religion of Japan. He also saw the necessity of studying "Dutch learning", not out of admiration, but as a form of military intelligence: he saw no advantage in learning how to make bread, for example, or in Western medicine.

New Theses was completed in 1825, but the lord of Mito did not allow its publication until 1858, even though some copies were circulated. It had, after all, criticized some of the *samurai* and also might arouse animosity in some of the domains whose philosophies did not necessarily agree with that of Mito. Part of his "black ships" had successfully returned to Edo, the Japanese capital, in 1854, and Aizawa's slogan of *jōi* (repel the foreigners) helped to inspire those who sought to restore the position of the Emperor. Aizawa was appalled to see his words twisted into an attack on the *bakufu*, but in 1862 he was obliged to advocate opening Japan to trade and intercourse with the West.

Dr Wakabayashi handles all his historical, philosophical and linguistic material with considerable skill. Historians will welcome the opportunity to see a translation of *New Theses*, and to consult the multitude of references to Japanese authorities which he provides. His general reader will not find it easy going, but he is interested in the growth of Japanese nationalism and the reaction to nineteenth-century imperialism, he will find the book worth while.

Servants of the Peacock

Robert Irwin

JOHN GUEST
The Yezidis: A study in survival
299pp. Kegan Paul International. £25.
07103 01154

I first learned of the existence of the Yezidi cult when as a schoolboy I purchased a lurid-looking paperback on secret societies by (the certainly pseudonymous) Arkon Daraul. "The veil of mystery" was "torn aside in this sensational book" and the Yezidis took their place beside the Tongues of Terror, the Castrators of Russia and the Holy Vehm. Daraul gave an account of his visits to the Putney branch of the Yezidi Order of the Peacock Angel, telling of how he had been welcomed by members of the society, robed in white, meditating in search of fulfillment and ecstasy at the foot of an eight-foot-high statue of a peacock. The alleged activities of the reputed Putney branch do not feature in John Guest's more sober and extremely comprehensive survey of the sect, but even sober scholarship can do little to mitigate the bizarre elements in Yezidi history and doctrine. Cultists of the Peacock Angel, guardians of a secret doctrine in a remote part of Kurdistan, brigades accused by their Muslim neighbours of Satanism - the Yezidis might be thought to be looking for a part in *The Adventures of Tintin*. In the medieval West many heretical groups were accused of worshipping the Devil, holding orgies, keeping black dogs as familiars, and so forth. Norman Cohn has argued that the accusations were fantasies, the product of "obsessive fears" and "unacknowledged terrifying desires" - part of an unconscious revolt against Christendom's repressive spiritual values. But witch-hunts and polemics against devil-worship have been comparatively rare in Islamic history, and it is not clear that this kind of psycho-historical explanation will serve in the case of the Yezidis. For one thing the Yezidis' rejection of such charges has in the

past been tinged with ambiguities.

Very little is straightforward in Yezidi history. The Yezidis (and it is not clear why they were so called) began their existence as a fairly orthodox group of disciples of the twelfth-century Sufi saint Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir. Sheikh Adi himself was perfectly orthodox, an austere ascetic, so emaciated that "when he bowed his head in prayer, one could hear his bones knock against the inside of his skull, like pebbles in a calabash". After Adi's death, his hermitage in Lalish, a remote valley north of Mosul, became the centre of the Adawiyya order of Sufis, and communities of his disciples were to be found elsewhere in Iraq, and also in Syria and Egypt. By the late thirteenth century the order had fallen into some disrepute. Ibn Taymiyya, the fundamentalist theologian, accused the Adawiyya of excessively venerating the founder of their order, and Badr al-Din Lulu, the Turkish warlord of Mosul, had the bones of Adi exhumed and burnt. But excessive veneration of saints has not been uncommon in Sufism, and Badr al-Din Lulu's action was probably motivated only by a desire to intimidate turbulent Kurdish hillmen who showed more respect towards the dead saint than they did towards Mosul's tax collectors. There is really nothing to suggest that the thirteenth-century Adawiyya had abandoned the worship of Allah for that of Melek Taus, the Peacock Angel. It is impossible to trace their steps towards apostasy, but at some point in the later Middle Ages the Kurdish Adawiyya had become known as Yezidis, and by the time European missionaries, chiefly Capuchins, began to penetrate Iraq in the late seventeenth century, Yezidism had become a fully fledged religion, with Sheikh Adi as its retroactive founder.

It was told how Sheikh Adi, riding in the desert, discovered an ancient tomb guarded by two camels with eight-foot-long legs and glowing green eyes. The tomb grew and grew before the Sheikh's eyes until it reached the sky. Adi in a panic kicked over a pitcher of water. The

tomb transformed itself into a boy with a peacock's tail who introduced himself as Melek Taus and took Adi up to heaven for seven years to be instructed in the truths of Yezidism. When Adi returned the water in the pitcher had not yet run out. Plainly the Yezidi religion draws on common folk-tale motifs as well as on local and seasonal cultic practices. (The White Spring at Lalish provides water for the tanks of sacred newts.) Equally plainly, their cult of the Fallen Angel who has yet been reconciled with God has parallels with certain Sufi teachings about Iblis (the Devil). Then again, it is plausible that their (rather obscure and muddled) theology draws on vestigial memories of Zoroastrian dualism. Some details may have been borrowed from the Yezidi's Nestorian Christian neighbours. Yezidi belief in metamorphosis was shared by many extreme Shi'ite sects. That Yezidi doctrine should appear to be a syncretistic patchwork job in part reflects the difficulties any dispersed heterodox minority will have in defining and enforcing its "orthodoxy". In part, though, it surely results from Yezidism's distrust of the written word. Sheikh Adi was opposed to books and his mostly illiterate followers went along with this prejudice. Even so, there were secret scriptures, and Guest's account of how these texts may have been purloined and transcribed for the benefit of Western scholars in the late nineteenth century is perhaps the most fascinating chapter in the book, an unedifying saga in which accusations and counter-accusations of forgery and academic pilfering abound. (Incidentally I note that Alphonse Mingana, one of the protagonists in all this, arrived in England and found a wealthy patron in 1913, the same year that the mysterious anonymous founder of Daraul's Putney group did the same.)

The second and larger part of Guest's book is devoted to the story of the Yezidis' survival under centuries of Ottoman rule into the present day, an epic of revolt and robbery. As a disgruntled Yezidi Sheikh remarked to a



A Yezidi girl from the Jebel Sinjar, reproduced from the book reviewed here.

nineteenth-century English traveller, "Do you see that hill opposite the village? Before Hafiz Pasha came here, the whole employment of the village of Kirs was to sit on the top of it all day, looking out for travellers and caravans, in order to plunder them; now that is at an end, and they have nothing to do."

The Yezidis: A study in survival has been assiduously researched and annotated. Guest's narrative is lucid, if rather pointilliste - the book needs to be read with some concentration. The noncommittal treatment leaves the central question of why one would want to be a Yezidi unanswered. However, it is the best work that we have on a remarkable and obscure topic.

Japanese pipe-dream

Carmen Blacker

BRIAN MOERAN
Okubo Diary: Portrait of a Japanese valley
251pp. Stanford University Press. £28.50.
08047 12964

Okubo Diary is a "fictionalized account" of a four-year stay in a Japanese mountain village. It is not a diary, despite its title, but a collection of 103 short undated essays and jottings on the model of the genre known in Japan as *zuihitsu*. These are arranged in roughly seasonal order, and a thread of continuous story can be discerned. But one finds oneself oddly suspended, out of time and space, for all names, both of places and people, have been deliberately disguised. We do not at first know where we are, or in what mountains the village lies. The sense of unreality is heightened by the knowledge that several of the characters, of whose rambling discourse much of the book consists, have been fused into composite figures.

The reason for such secrecy, Brian Moeran warns us in his introduction, is to protect certain individuals in the village, and also to protect himself, since some of the events described were at the time of writing the subject of dispute in a Japanese court of law. But it does not require any very astute detective work to discover that the village is Sarayama in Kyushu, the home of the celebrated Ono folk pottery so admired by cognoscenti such as Yanagi Sôetsu and Bernard Leach. For in 1984, only a year before the appearance of the book under review, Professor Moeran published *Lost Innocence: Folk craft potters of Ono, Japan*, which gave a vivid and fascinating account, intended for a mixed readership of anthropologists and potters, of the village of Sarayama, its pottery craft, its complex social relations, its clay, and the rise of the *mingei* or folk craft movement in Japan which brought it to fame.

Okubo Diary seems to be a kind of by-product of this former book. Here, collected together for readers other than anthropologists

and potters, is something of the human side of life: the friends Moeran made among the potters and farmers, their weddings and funerals, their summer outings, their drinking sessions, their dances when the dead come back in summer, their rivalries and quarrels. These people talk to him freely, explaining their lives and gossiping about their neighbours. A thread of drama runs through the book, the predicament of the foreigner or outsider in the midst of a tightly knit rural community. At first welcomed, petted, given every facility to pursue his anthropological investigation of a potting village, he is so entranced that he hopes to make the place his home, buying a tumble-down old house with a little land attached. It quickly becomes clear that the plan is a pipe-dream. As soon as he tries to buy land, difficulties arise, and he finds himself involved in a web of complex obligations and quarrels. He realizes that oyo hope of being accepted into the community as "one of them" is out of the question.

Worse still, his son suffered a frightful accident in the swimming-pool during school hours; having been told to dive in at the shallow end. In the subsequent future no one - neither the swimming teacher, nor the school, nor the local education authority - was prepared to accept an iota of responsibility. One and all resorted to lies, prevarication and distortion to evade any hint of blame. Eventually and reluctantly, knowing the Japanese distaste for litigation, Moeran was forced to file a suit for damages in a Japanese court. He won his case, but it was referred to a higher court; and at the time of writing was still *sub judice*. Sadly, he withdrew from the village. Sadly too we realize that the same fate would await any "stranger" from outside hoping to buy an old farmhouse in the hills.

The story for all its jollity is a melancholy one, and if the reader at times suspects that he has to be content with half a loaf, he should reread the introduction. Here, Professor Moeran makes it plain that he is following, in the *zuihitsu* tradition, the principle that "the essence of communication rests not so much in what is said as in what is not said."

The other side of the yen

Lesley Downer

DAVID E. KAPLAN and ALEC DUBRO
Yakuza: The explosive account of Japan's criminal underworld
336pp. Macdonald. £10.95.
0356 142264

In David Kaplan and Alec Dubro's *Yakuza*, Japan as a crime-free society comes under scrutiny, and emerges badly tarnished. The book would not have been written had these axitic gangsters, the Eastern equivalent of the Mafia, known in Japan as *yakuza*, kept to their own side of the world, where, in Japanese fashion, they had their particular place in society. Apart from the occasional token raid, police and press left them in peace. But when they expanded the scope of their activities to Hawaii, they drew upon themselves the full force of American journalism. When the two authors, members of San Francisco's Centre for Investigative Reporting, began their research, they found the Japanese authorities strangely reluctant to co-operate.

Yakuza is the result of four years' research and over 400 interviews, with, among others, some of the leading *yakuza* "godfathers". Kaplan and Dubro's conclusions are supported by a mass of evidence; though sometimes their political leanings - clearly well left of centre - lead them to over-emphasize material which supports their case. An example is the sex trade: Asian women are lured to Japan, where they are "plunged into a world... of sexual slavery, forced to work as poorly paid prostitutes in the brothels of Japan". After several pages of similar highly coloured prose, the authors finally allow a paragraph to the Manila correspondent of Kyodo News Agency: "More than 90 per cent of [Philippine] women who were in Japan want to return. The money is excellent for them and they got along with the *yakuza* just fine."

The investigation began with the *yakuza* themselves, identifiable by their ornate body tattoos and missing little finger, as well as

American cars. The sheer numbers are startling. In spite of Japan's vaunted low crime rates, there are 110,000 registered *yakuza* in total population of 125 million - all entitled to tax relief on "business expenses" such as "allowances to gangsters sent out for information, payment to lookouts during illegal gambling sessions and expenses of pimps". In comparison, the United States Mafia numbers mere 20,000. Like the Mafia, the *yakuza* deal in drugs - mainly amphetamines - and in extortion, gun-running and "sexual slavery". The sex tours of the 1970s, when thousands of Japanese men visited Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand, are described in rather less detail. Another Japanese myth to which that of agreement by consensus. Apparent compromises, including the major ones, possibly employ *sokaiya*, *yakuza* bully boys, to enforce any opposition from shareholders.

Most damning of all is the degree of corruption which the authors discovered among Japanese politicians. Not only do many receive financial support from the *yakuza*, but there seem to be intimate links between the gangsters and the right wing, at least, of the new LDP party. Yoshio Kodama, Japan's powerful *kuromaku* (godfather) bridge builder, the present Prime Minister, Nakasone, Most of this is known to the Japanese, and seem not to be shocked by it. As one *yakuza* boss on the subject of Tanaka's multi-million-dollar bribes, "In Japan, politicians receiving bribes is like a sacred tradition; everyone knows it and it is bad luck if you are caught."

Industrial Collaboration with Japan by John Turner is No 34 in the series *Cambridge Papers* (117pp. Royal Institute of International Affairs/Routledge and Kegan Paul. Paperback, £5.95. 0 7102 1109 0), and draws on and summarizes the work of an international team of Japanese, German, American and British research workers. Electronics, motive engineering, information technology and aerospace receive detailed treatment in a context of the history of Western industrial

The Catholic Church in World Politics

Eric O. Hanson

From Warsaw to Washington, from Manila to Managua, the Roman Catholic Church is a highly visible element in today's politics. The Vatican now balances its traditional support for Western values and institutions with a role as putative mediator in East-West conflicts, and Pope John Paul II's adroit use of Western secular media has expanded public awareness of the Catholic position on events in the pope's native Poland and on issues of arms control, abortion and human rights. National Catholic hierarchies, too, have become significant political actors, using such tools as the American bishops' widely publicized pastoral letter on peace. For all those who are concerned about arms control and Soviet-American relations, the role of religion in politics, and the state of the Roman Catholic Church, Eric Hanson's multifaceted book examines the place of the church in the contemporary international system and the reciprocal influence of modern political and technological developments on the internal affairs of the church. Photographs. Cloth: \$24.95.

The Political Economy of International Relations

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Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1987. Pp. 312. £14.95.

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Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1987. Pp. 312. £14.95.

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Only human

David Miller

J. BUDZISZEWSKI
The Resurrection of Nature: Political theory and the human character
218pp. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. \$24.40.

08014 (900) X
STEPHEN D. HUDSON
Human Character and Morality: Reflections from the history of ideas
164pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £11.95. 07102 07709

CHRISTOPHER J. BERRY
Human Nature
162pp. Macmillan. £20 (paperback, £6.95). 0333 375238

These three books are united in their attempt to present "human nature" as having a major explanatory role in moral and political theory. Let us call this view naturalism. For naturalism to be an interesting possibility, two things must be true. First, we must be able to provide empirical evidence that human nature is sufficiently invariant across cultures and types of social organization to be taken as a premise in arguments seeking to justify moral and political ideals. Second, the fixed elements that we discover must be substantial enough to do some useful work in this role. It is not enough to be told that all human beings use language and die without adequate supplies of food; we must have richer information about, for instance, people's characteristic motives and capacities.

Naturalism has had a long innings in moral and political theory, but is often now regarded as discredited. This discrediting occurred in two phases. The first was occasioned by the rise of historical thinking in the first half of the nineteenth century, exemplified in the work of Hegel, Marx and the younger Mill. The upshot was a bifurcated conception of human nature. On the one hand, there was basic human nature, invariant across all historical periods, but for the same reason rudimentary; on the other, there was developed human nature, as it had emerged through a succession of historical stages, culminating in the present (or, in Marx's case, the future) period. It was developed human nature that provided the grounding for moral and political recommendations: thus we find Mill confining his defence of representative government explicitly to "civilized" peoples. But since the pattern of history was determinate and irreversible, such a grounding was perfectly adequate.

The second phase began when confidence in this latter belief evaporated. If history was no longer the story of human development from infancy to adulthood, then there was no longer any way of placing different manifestations of human nature on an ascending scale. All that could be said was that human nature took on different forms in the urban village and the European city, in the Japan of the Samurai and the America of the frontier. From this it seemed to follow that the concept could play no independent role in moral and political argument. We were faced with irreducible value choices between modes of life, and it was bad faith to believe that we could be helped in making them by appeal to the supposed essential properties of human beings.

Thus the way lay open for the various forms of subjectivism, relativism and conventionalism with which we are all familiar. But for some there was another possibility. Might it not be possible to build a theory on rudimentary human nature, that is, on those basic features of human beings that were demonstrably invariant across cultures? Prominent here were theories of Kantian provenance that took as central the human capacities to reason and to choose, and sought to derive substantive moral and political conclusions from these capacities alone. But this strategy was never very promising. All of its practitioners (of whom the most eminent in recent years has been John Rawls) can be charged with smuggling into their arguments culturally specific assumptions – for instance, about the kinds of goods that people enjoy having. The barrage of criticism along these lines that Rawls's project has attracted is such that he has now retreated to describing his theory as a "systematization of ideas found in

"the public culture of a constitutional democracy" – thereby conceding its relative character.

None of the books considered here aligns itself with this minimalist, Kantian project. All aspire to a more robust form of naturalism. All make substantial reference to the history of ideas, drawing on pre-modern theories of human nature to buttress their arguments. None, I believe, faces up squarely to the challenge posed with such brilliance in Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, namely that the context of ideas which made naturalism a plausible view has been irretrievably shattered. But all, none the less, are at pains to distance themselves from a full-blown Aristotelian naturalism, according to which the best life for human beings can be read off from an empirically discoverable set of characteristics in the same way as the best life for elephants or seals.

J. Budziszewski, for instance, in *The Resurrection of Nature: Political theory and the human character*, draws a distinction between human nature as that which is innate in human beings (ie, does not have to be learned); human nature as that which is common to human



"Roger and Sophie", 1981, one of Alex Katz's huge oil paintings, is reproduced from Alex Katz by Ann Beattie (92pp, with 26 colour illustrations. New York: Abrams. \$27.50. 08109 12120). The book is the result of an Abrams editor's desire to find out what would happen "if a writer were asked to examine the work of a painter of like imagination without the constraints of art historical reference or criticism". Beattie, chronicler of post-1960s alienation, has provided an extended fictional essay on the works illustrated.

beings across cultural boundaries; and human nature as the full and appropriate development of human capacities. He believes that the first category includes rather little, and he sees that there is an important gap between the first two together and the third: observing what is biologically given and what is culturally universal does not settle the question how human beings ought to flourish. He thinks, none the less, that the latter question can be answered in naturalistic fashion, through "mature self-reflection", which includes reflection on the contents of categories one and two. His own answer is that "the good of the soul is found in the rational activity by which we understand ourselves and order our lives according to purposes".

At first sight this appears to be an unhelpfully thin (not to say vague) account of human flourishing. According to Budziszewski, the good life must have a certain unity to it, which comes from self-understanding and the consistent pursuit of the purposes thereby disclosed, but the character of the purposes themselves remains an open issue. Might a consistent and reflective theorist then be thought of as living (a version of) the good life? Budziszewski would almost certainly wish to resist such an implication; and this comes out in his discussion of the virtues as qualities that are needed to sustain human flourishing. Included here are social virtues such as honesty and loyalty, and the thought is that self-understanding and consistency of purpose require a social context in which purposes can be formed and expressed. This, however, is only true in a rather weak sense. Clearly we must take on board language and perhaps other social institutions

if we are to engage in rational thought and behaviour; but having equipped ourselves in this way, it is perfectly conceivable to opt for a life of complete self-indulgence, free-riding on the institutions that have formed us. Someone who chooses to do this must obviously forgo certain ends – such as friendship – but that is only an objection if we assume that self-understanding must invariably reveal these as among our basic goals.

There is a hidden agenda to Budziszewski's book. Billed as a defence of naturalism, its fundamental commitments are in fact religious. Divine revelation provides the ultimate standard against which empirical human nature is judged. The author claims that he wants to chart the road down which "some and Christian naturalists can travel together", but in my view the secular naturalists are being piggy-back on their companions from an early stage.

Budziszewski's hook has some interesting passages, but it is over-ambitious. Stephen D. Hudson sets himself more modest targets and his book, *Human Character and Morality: Reflections from the history of ideas*, is the better for it. Rather than attempting to advance a substantive conception of human nature, he looks at the relation between that nature and our notion of morality. Indeed, his central point is that human nature is complex and contradictory, and we should therefore expect the institution of morality to display a corresponding complexity. In particular, we should reject what he calls the "direct view" according to which the aim of moral theory should be to select principles that give a complete and consistent set of practical directives, so that in any situation there will unambiguously be one morally right action to perform. Against this, Hudson argues that morality has to do with character as well as with action; and that a moral theory may be adequate if it gives practical guidance but not a definitive resolution of all moral conflicts.

Hume features prominently in Hudson's book as an exponent of this alternative, "a direct" view, and it is welcome to see him presented not merely as a proponent of the distinction between "is" and "ought" statements (as in Budziszewski's book), but as a thinker whose main concern was to relate moral judgments to other aspects of human psychology. A Humean form of naturalism locates the connection between the facts of human nature and moral beliefs in the psychological capacities and limits of human beings. Devices such as Rowls's original position, which attempt to derive moral principles from axioms of rationality, are pointless if the outcome is a set of principles which it is psychologically impossible for people to follow in practice. Hume's method is to start with natural sentiments and to see how far it is possible to move towards the position of an impartial spectator standing outside spatial and temporal relationships. Naturalism of this kind will tend to be conservative, in the sense that it begins with existing beliefs and attitudes from which only limited departures can be contemplated – a corollary that Hudson seems happy to accept.

Christopher J. Berry's *Human Nature* has a rather different aim, namely to show that ideas of human nature play an indispensable role in political theory. He has little difficulty in showing how different interpretations of the human essence correspond to different conceptions of justice, freedom and so forth. But he gets into much deeper water when trying to explain just what argumentative role these interpretations play. He maintains on the one hand that a view of human nature rests on empirically discoverable facts; on the other that the purposes of the theorist will determine which facts are "relevant". But if political theorists can pick and choose in this way, highlighting those aspects of (empirically given) human nature that support their case and ignoring others, it is no longer clear that "human nature" is playing a foundational role. Instead, value commitments are being made first, and accounts of human nature manufactured to order. If that is so, the omnipresence of theories of human nature would no longer be such an interesting discovery.

Berry's problems are compounded because he thinks of naturalism not as one option among several, but as a compulsory element in political thought. In one chapter he considers

the challenges to this position mounted by Sartre and Rorty. His reply is that the challenges themselves cannot be formulated without saying something about human beings (eg, "man is essentially free"). This is undoubtedly true, but it overlooks the distinction drawn above between uncontroversial, rudimentary human nature, and the much fuller picture of human capacities and motivations that naturalist positions require. The rudimentary elements may provide a sufficient basis from which to mount a critique of naturalism.

Human Nature is intended primarily as a textbook, and it contains useful surveys of conceptions of human nature in political thought. It is less convincing when it tries to tackle epistemological issues posed by the idea of human nature. In all three books, excursions into the history of ideas are to some extent enjoyed at the expense of sustained argument on the central topic itself. We may surmise that their authors finally lack confidence in their ability to sustain a naturalist position, and take refuge in the arguments of illustrious predecessors who, if MacIntyre is right, were operating in a more congenial intellectual environment.

What should we conclude about the idea of human nature? It is best seen as an empirical concept whose argumentative function is to set limits to normative claims, rather than to justify them directly. It comprises two elements: first, what I have called rudimentary human nature; second, the whole spectrum of human personality as revealed by anthropology and comparative sociology. In this second dimension, it is human nature to be a Homeric warrior and to be an Indian holy beggar and to be a New England capitalist. But equally it is not human nature to be all of these at once, and this primarily, is where the practical implications of the concept are to be found. A moral theory is deficient if it presupposes capacities in human beings which are nowhere to be found, or which are never found together in combination. Likewise, a political theory is defective if the institutions it prescribes require people to behave in ways which, empirically, they never do, or (this is the more likely case) if it imposes incompatible requirements – to behave in some respects like a Homeric warrior and in others like a New England capitalist. A plausible moral or political theory, respecting these limits, is likely to embody an ideal of human personality, chosen from the available range, but it is duplicitous for the theory's proponents to present this as human nature tout court.

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RICHARD F. TEICHGRAEBER III

"Free Trade" and Moral Philosophy:

Rethinking the sources of Adam Smith's

"Wealth of Nations"

212pp. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

£35.

08223 05267

In this ambitious book, Richard Teichgraber seeks to recover the intellectual sources of the *Wealth of Nations*, and thereby contribute to a better understanding of the intellectual origins of capitalism than Marx, Weber or a range of twentieth-century historians have been able to attain. "Free Trade" and Moral Philosophy is, as the author repeatedly acknowledges, selective in its focus, but Teichgraber is keen to break new ground, and to make the subject accessible to the general reader as well as to the specialist (though the price of the book alone must make that second hope forlorn).

He approaches the work of Adam Smith through substantial chapters on his Scottish contemporaries and mentors, Francis Hutcheson and David Hume, these together forming "arguably the three most important thinkers within the Scottish Enlightenment". To reconstruct the overall architecture of their thought, Teichgraber relates them to two pre-existing intellectual traditions. One is the new conception of moral philosophy pioneered by Shaftesbury at the turn of the seventeenth century. Taking the sentiments rather than reason to be the source of moral values, Shaftesbury had sought to retrieve the concept of virtue from the strictures of Hobbes. The other tradition is that of Natural Law Jurisprudence, renewed by Grotius earlier in the seventeenth century. Here the crucial innovations were the distinction of perfect from imperfect rights, relegating ordinary moral duties to the second category, the identification of the paradigmatic perfect right as exclusive property, the narrowing of government's primary purpose to the protection of such property, and hence the re-orientation of the theory of justice around commercial activity rather than politics. It is when traced to these sources, Teichgraber argues, that the thought of Smith and his Scottish mentors can best be understood, and the differences between them thrown into most revealing relief.

The book is interesting and challenging in a number of ways. Two stand out. In the first

place, Teichgraber offers a reassessment of the relative importance for Smith of Hutcheson and of Hume, arguing that both in moral philosophy and in jurisprudence Smith was in significant respects closer to Hutcheson. Like Hutcheson, he continued to believe that moral philosophy should concern itself with virtue, a quality towards which Hume was notoriously cool. Indeed, Teichgraber argues, this commitment to virtue was such that we should still recognize the existence of an "Adam Smith Problem" in the relation between Smith's two major works, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*. There is a – possibly deliberate – gulf between the enthusiasm for virtue shown in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the refusal in *The Wealth of Nations* to value commercial activity in moral terms. As with virtue, so with rights: in his jurisprudence Smith continued to use a concept prominent in Hutcheson but virtually discarded by Hume. Acknowledging but sidestepping Hume's technical criticisms of Hutcheson's usage of the concept, Smith went on to outline a programme of legal reform unimagined by Hume.

Teichgraber's second challenging conclusion concerns the contribution of the *Wealth of Nations* to the argument for laissez-faire in the economy. Not only was Smith unoriginal in his commitment to free trade, having been anticipated by Hume and by seventeenth-century English economic writers, but his purpose, Teichgraber argues, was less to make the case for free trade than to make plain the radicalism of that doctrine, and the dangers of its imposition on an uncomprehending people. Confessing that complete free trade was a "utopia", Smith put all his historical realism and political pragmatism at the service of a demonstration that measures to introduce free trade must ever be partial and piecemeal.

Teichgraber offers much to debate, but there are problems in the approach he has chosen, and in the construction of his arguments. One turns out to be less serious than might be expected: the danger of anachronism in identifying the *Wealth of Nations* with the intellectual history of capitalism is largely circumvented by understanding "capitalism" in terms of the eighteenth-century idea of "commercial society". More dangerous is Teichgraber's acknowledged selectivity of focus. Excluding the social context in order to concentrate on the intellectual story may be justified (although the reason given, that Scotland did not change significantly before the 1790s, is distinctly odd), but the intellectual story itself

is distorted by selectivity both in the use of secondary authorities and in the choice of primary subjects. Selective invocation of other scholars allows the author to assume a naturalistic rather than a sceptical reading of Hume's moral philosophy, and, to a lesser extent, to set aside the potential contribution of the classical republican tradition to the Scots' political thought. As for the primary subjects, the inclusion in the story of Adam Ferguson, certainly no less a thinker than Hutcheson, would have put Smith's enthusiasm for virtue into perspective. If Smith was prepared to show warmth in the cause of virtue, the temperature of his commitment, even in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, still fell short of that demanded by Ferguson, who seems to have found Smith almost as cool as Hume.

Finally, there is a problem in the book's construction. Repeatedly, Teichgraber insists that moral philosophy provided the "connecting principles" of all three Scots' thought – only to contend that the doctrine of free trade developed out of the separation of ethics from jurisprudence, as the scope of the latter was restricted to perfect rights. The two strands of Teichgraber's argument point to a real puzzle. Smith was a moral philosopher, and he indicated more than once that he saw his various works, published and projected, as a connected whole. Yet he also wrote the *Wealth of Nations* as a virtually self-standing exposition of economic principles and their application. Teichgraber, however, assumes at the outset that moral philosophy provides the key to the intellectual origins of the *Wealth of Nations* itself, and hence he is obliged to maintain that the two strands of his argument form one coherent thread. The puzzle, which several of his arguments illuminate, cannot be directly explored, to the potential confusion of readers.

David Hume and the Eighteenth Century British Thought: An annotated catalogue has recently appeared as the centennial publication of Chuo University (560pp. Chuo University Library, 742-1 Higashinakano, Hachioji-shi, Tokyo 192-03, Japan). Prepared by Sadao Ikeda, the catalogue gives a detailed description of books and letters acquired in 1982 from the private library of Dr John Valdimir Price. The first part consists chiefly of works by Hume, published in his lifetime. The second contains fifteen letters from Hume, and the third 235 books mainly by eighteenth-century British writers.

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John Coatsworth

Sleeping with the supervisor

Helen King

BERNARD SERGENT
Homosexuality in Greek Myth
Translated by Arthur Goldhammer
344pp. Athlone Press. £32.
0485113198
*L'homosexualité initiatique dans l'Europe
antienne*
297pp. Paris: Payot. 160fr.
2228141305

Georges Dumézil's preface to *Homosexuality in Greek Myth* places Bernard Sergent's work in the historical process by which the denial that the glorious Greeks could possibly be involved in anything as sordid as homosexuality has gradually become the affirmation that homosexuality and heterosexuality are both valid forms of sexual expression, and are not always mutually exclusive. He praises Sergent for giving "not only the raw data but also brilliant applications of interpretive methods". It is true that there is a vast amount of data in both volumes. While the first concentrates on Greek myth, the second expands the argument into other types of source material and other parts of Europe. The methods, however, are open to question.

Despite the apparently more general title of the translated volume, both books deal almost

exclusively with homosexuality in an initiatory context, in which a mature man (*erastes*) of high rank abducts a young boy (*eromenos*) of similar rank and acts as his master, teacher and lover. Although Sergent also mentions female homosexuality, and those individuals who continued to form homosexual relationships beyond the normal ages, his main interest is thus in homosexuality as a deliberate rejection of women in the course of making the boy into a real man. He distinguishes his approach from that of many other writers in that he does not regard ancient Greek homosexuality as tied to the institution of the city-state, but rather as a practice going back to the most distant Greek past; indeed, as he hints in the first book and develops in the second, he wants to trace it back still further, to early Indo-European culture.

Although myth, seen here as preserving the memory of past institutions rather than in terms of what it meant to those who continued to tell it, is the major source for the first book, even there Sergent uses two main "historical" cases to support his argument: the first Cretan, the second Germanic. At the end of the initiatory relationship, sometimes marked by the sacrifice of an animal or a successful hunt, the *eromenos* is given presents, and is recognized as having become a mature man. In the Cretan case the gifts are a cup, a military costume and

an ox. In the first book Sergent, following Dumézil's tripartite model for early Indo-European classification, sees represented here the "three functions": politics, war and economics. Politics covers kingship and religion; the cup is used to pour libations to the gods, hence its assignment to this function. The ox is a major element in ancient agriculture and so comes under economics, although one could argue that, as it is sacrificed by the *eromenos* to Zeus, it could also go under politics/kingship/religion. But in that case the tripartite model would presumably not work. In the second book Sergent has noticed the difficulty, and he moves the ox from economics to politics; he then reverses nearly out of the corner by moving the cup as well, from politics to economics, because it is used to drink from at the banquet after the sacrifice.

The relationship between model and data is stretched further when Sergent turns to the three aspects mentioned in the story of how a Cretan *erastes* chooses an *eromenos*. He tells us that "orderly behaviour" corresponds to politics, "manly courage" to war and "good looks" to economics. Here alarm bells begin to ring. The argument followed for "good looks" is, I think, that economics/production/agriculture includes sumptuary laws for controlling luxury, and that physical attraction comes close to luxury. Trifunctionality, like structuralist binary models or Freudian sexual symbolism, can easily be taken to excess.

There are other problems of method; for example, Sergent's use of anthropological comparisons outside the Indo-European context. This is often superficial, as his casual "Here are a few ethnographic comparisons,

chosen at random from my reading" makes only too clear. Although the examples succeed in making "vivid and vital" a picture of the ancient world in which the nature of the evidence leaves inevitable gaps, the richness and particularity of the other societies cited is lost. Later Sergent writes, "we cannot say that similar phenomena are identical when the social norms in terms of which they are defined are different" — a maxim which should have been applied far more carefully. Similar criticism could be made of his modern analogies. For example, he makes much of a comparison between the invitation to the *erastes* to dine with the *eromenos* at the end of the initiation process, and inviting one's PhD supervisor to dinner after the viva; is it significant, he wonders, that the latter process is particularly prevalent in Germanic countries? Well, of course a meal can mark an important event; but one does not necessarily sleep with one's supervisor, even in "Germanic countries", whatever Sergent says about the closeness between the educational process and sex.

Both volumes are well produced. The translation of *Homosexuality in Greek Myth* is sometimes a little too close to the original French, and can read heavily. To those otodom-conscious days I was surprised to see that "French leather" has not been corrected for English-speaking readers. A little more care could also have been taken to ensure that all puns were intentional, although I much enjoyed the suggestion that the festival commemorating Hyakinthos, beloved of Apollo, "was divided into two parts, the first and the second gay" (French, "la première triste, la seconde gaie").

That which comes between

A. W. Price

ANNE CARSON
Eros the Bittersweet: An essay
189pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.
£15.40.
0691066817

"Love that time was not as love is nowadays", writes Malory of Launcelot and Guinevere. Anne Carson describes love as it evolved during the early days of Greek lyric poetry in a way partly strange, partly familiar. She suggests (daring Bruno Snell) that falling in love makes one peculiarly aware of the barriers of the self; and (following Eric Havelock) that the experience was intensified by the invention of literacy. For reading, unlike listening, involves a focusing of attention, a blanking out of one's environment and such self-control also alerts one to the boundary between interior self and external world. Falling in love, so often spoken of then in terms of melting, becomes a threat to a newly won individuality: "The lover learns as he loses it to value the bounded entity of himself."

Writing emphasizes separation — between word and word, between writer and reader, between reader and environment. Carson relates this thought more precisely to the coyeties of the Greek alphabet. The Greeks invented consonants, which mark the edges of sound. Love and writing then reflected one another: "As eros insists upon the edges of human beings and of the spaces between them, the written consonant imposes edge on the sounds of human speech." This, she argues, gave to antique love a special quality that we faded literates can only guess at.

Such is a central thesis of Carson's densely reflective book. To the reader caught up in its artificially scintillating prose, subdivided into artfully titled sections, it may seem crude to ask: Is this credible? One may be untortured by the paradox that love seems both to create and to abolish the self (for erotic reality may be inherently paradoxical). More troubling, amid the niceties of the argument, is a loss of common sense. Consider the following:

For the inhabitants of an oral society love much more intimately blended with their surroundings than we do. Space and the distance between things are of first importance; these are aspects emphasized by the visual sense. What is vital, in a world of sound, is to

maintain continuity.

Did the Greeks use their eyes only for reading? Also troubling is the ambiguity of the evidence: consonants may mark divisions between syllables, but they also unite with vowels within syllables. To a selective hyper-perceptivity all conclusions are permitted.

The argument is advanced by readings of Archilochus, Sappho, Sophocles and Plato that are always intelligent, but often eccentric. Where Richard Jenkyns, wholly persuasively, elicits out of a single prefix in a poem of Sappho's that we are to see "the man straining closer to the girl to catch each intimate remark", Carson dissolves the man into a psychological abstraction: he is "a cognitive and intentional necessity", symbolizing that "where eros is lack, its actualization calls for three structural components — lover, beloved and that which comes between them". Where Kenneth Dover (like the common reader) takes Alcibiades to be placing his own coat above Socrates' old cloak "as a tip blanket" before joining him as it were between the sheets, Carson has Alcibiades wrap Socrates up in his own coat before "embracing the bundled-up object of his desire", rather like Tristan laying a naked sword between himself and Isolde (think of her comparison). Perhaps we are meant to understand Carson as playing variations, not offering interpretations. Indeed, this would seem the only inference to draw from her habit of treating fragments of verse as if they formed whole poems.

In all, it is hard to take Carson's conclusions, or her evidence, very seriously. John Winkler may be more just than he intends in calling her book a "poem of the intellect". As an exercise in ingenuity and sensitivity (also some obscurity), it may be savoured according to taste. Her marshalling of pertinent quotations from the early Greek lyric poets is a welcome reminder of a fragmentary profession. Her observations about metre, though slightly overstrained, display a keenly imaginative ear. Every reader will make his own note of felicitous observations nicely put. To my own taste, her fondness for a small range of metaphors out of geometry, optics and electricity becomes repetitive, the effect at once woozy and trivial, but in belles-lettres and *jeux d'esprit* (though not in real poetry) judgment is a matter of taste, and some will find that Carson's verbal cleverness revivifies for them the pleasures of literacy.

The peasant's-eye view

Juliet du Boulay

JAMES C. DAVIS
Rise from Want: A peasant family in the Machine Age
165pp. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press. £16.95.
0812280342

James C. Davis, married to a first generation émigré from the Slovene-speaking village of Vidovlje in what is now Italy, above Trieste on the Karst plateau, has a particular interest in seeing history from a peasant's-eye view. In *Rise from Want* he studies the momentous changes occurring in the Balkans, from serfdom through famine and deprivation and two world wars to modern industrial prosperity, exclusively in terms of their impact on a succession of his wife's patrilineal ancestors — the Žužek family.

Starting with the Žužeks' putative origins in the sixteenth century when the family were serfs of the Counts of Duino, the story takes shape with the birth of Tomaž in 1774. The description of the first hundred years is the fortunes of the family, until the family's oral tradition can be tapped from the mid-1850s on, a reconstructed from records such as charters, church registers, wills, travel diaries, police and tax records, while the life histories throughout are set in the overall historical and political context. Even during this earlier period the Žužeks are beginning their "rise from want", keeping sheep and tilling their few poor acres, while, in succession, decrees ending first serfdom and then hereditary subjection come into force, culminating with the peasants' acquisition, in 1861, of title to the land. From the mid-1850s, with the building of the railway and the resurgence of work in the quarries, through small improvements in nutrition, living conditions and hygiene, and then the advent of medicine, formal education and



A Sorbian (or Wend) child in local costume from the Lusatia region of East Germany. The photograph is reproduced from DDR (327 colour illustrations with accompanying explanatory text in German, Russian, English and French, Leipzig: P. A. Brockhaus, 3 325 00018 5).

literacy, the effects of industrialization on peasant life are portrayed convincingly as a long process which over several generations steadily influenced the Žužeks' way of life, long before the great industrial boom of the 1950s brought with it radical social and economic change.

The author has intended this book not just for scholars but also for those who have "somewhere among their ancestors, a poor peasant or two", and because of this the book takes the form of a tale simply — even simplistically — told, with discussion and argument kept to a minimum, and all information not directly related to the main theme relegated to notes. This format allows for much human detail: there is the Žužek who, overheard foretelling his own death from the booting of an owl, was indeed found dead of a heart attack a few days later; and the Žužek whose first love was murdered by the girl's jilted fiancé, and who irritated his two subsequent wives by remember-

ing her every night in his prayers. And in the contrast between the latest Žužek family to be recorded (five children, of whom four reached maturity and are still alive, and the parents recently dead at the ages of eighty and ninety) with the first (eleven children of whom only three survived childhood, with the wife dying at thirty-six and the husband at fifty-six), the statistics are indeed, as the author claims, clothed in flesh and blood.

But the story, although clearly told, lacks information on the values and beliefs of Karst village society as a whole, so that the Žužeks are presented as if they responded in isolation to their economic and political environment, and their motivations tend to be discussed in terms of individual inclination rather than in the context of an ordered pattern of customary social norms. More crucially, this lack of reference to village culture leads to the absence of any serious consideration of those features in village life which are to do with morality and

symbolism, art and religion. No real idea is given of the existence of networks of kinship and friendship sustaining the individual families, and the question at least arises whether singing, dancing or music, embroidery, carving or metalwork, celebration of marriages, harvest times, and saints' days, were not important features of these peasants' lives: from Franc Žužek, for instance, the author's father-in-law, Davis records, though he does not follow up, the opinion that the "misery" of the old days nevertheless carried with it a certain quality of social and religious life which the old man considered ill-lost.

The author is at pains to do justice to the Žužeks and with them the "many millions of poor families" he feels them to represent; so it is ironic that his exclusive concern with the purely economic and political, and his unquestioning acceptance of the values of the modern world — of literacy, of factory-made clothes, of the absence of manure — lead him to a Hobbesian picture of traditional peasant life in which only the hardship is evident: the peasants are prey to "insolence", their piety is "unreflective", their acceptance of hard work "oxlike", and their lack of transport causes them to walk everywhere "like snits". Thus what Davis intends as an apology for the peasants who "saved no souls, and penned no poems, but who helped to make life possible for those who did", amounts in fact to an unwitting devaluation, ignoring the spiritual values which are almost universally strongest among pre-industrial rural people, and the poetry and song which, created by the oral tradition, have provided the models for literate endeavour.

This flaw is I believe an important one, in that it reinforces conceptually the already accomplished disinclination of peasants from their past. Nevertheless this book, if it is taken as representing one side of a more complex picture, throws a sympathetic light on the passage through time of one peasant family, and adds a historical dimension usually missing in more anthropological studies.

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COMMENTARY

Laurel love-object

Arthur Jacobs

RICHARD STRAUSS
Daphne
Grand Theatre, Leeds

Older theatregoers may recall Edith Evans turning into a tree in James Bridie's *Daphne Laureola*, but Richard Strauss's operatic version of the myth has until now remained unstaged in this country. Even the composer's dedicated adherents have generally been reserved in their praises of the score, though Pauline Strauss is said to have declared it her favourite among her husband's operas. A certain obloquy has fallen on the libretto of Joseph Gregor, whom Strauss accepted as collaborator when political pressures in Nazi Germany broke his partnership with the Jewish Stefan Zweig.

In one long act, *Daphne* was originally intended to take its place in a double bill with *Friedenstag* (for which, also, Gregor had written the libretto) and indeed had its Dresden premiere in that form in 1938. But it has more often been allowed to stand on its own, as in the new production by Opera North – which, despite some unnecessary mystification on stage, ranks high in the achievement of the company and its musical director, David Lloyd-Jones.

A hint has been dropped that Opera North finds in Strauss a partial substitute for those larger-scale Wagner works which are financial-

ly outside its grasp. If you cannot have Erda, then have her Greek likeness in Gaea, the Earth Mother, similarly given to slow, low-toned contralto utterance. But the drama in *Daphne* is without Wagnerian cosmic pretensions; and unlike such a later work as Henze's *The Bassarids*, it invests classical myth with no modern psychological insights. The case is specific and once-upon-a-time. The adolescent Daphne rejects her shepherd suitor, Leukippos, and is swept off her feet by the disguised Apollo. The god slays Leukippos but then repents his own intrusion and metamorphoses his love-object into the laurel.

At first the music promises only the golden-glowing "autumnal" style with which Strauss lulls us too easily in such works as the *Four Last Songs*. We recognize, inevitably, echoes of the earlier and more vigorous operas. An orchestral motive of downward-striding fourths, representing the god's power, recalls the similar strides by which John the Baptist, in *Salmé*, proclaims the power of his Master. But suddenly, and by the purely musical means of an unprecedented chord of Schoenberg-like complexity, the tension between Apollo and Daphne is made manifest. From then, the large-scale operatic structure is fully articulated and the piece goes convincingly to its goal.

That moment of tension is exactly seized in a gesture of meeting hands – a fine stroke on the part of the director Philip Prowse. But he betrays that truthfulness to the text by a conjuring trick: Apollo is not Apollo but, casting off his dark cloak, appears finally as a twentieth-cen-

tury, cigarette-cuse-tapping cynic in what used to be called "immaculate evening dress" (Prowse, as usual, is his own designer.) Fortunately the closing scene of the opera, in which the young woman has become the branching tree and the melody sings has diverged from fashion and as beautifully as practicalities permit.

The ardent tone and virginal air required for Daphne's role are found by Helen Field in marvellous touching Gretchen in the English National Opera's *Faust*. But she does not always get beyond the up-and-down wags of phrase to convey the longer span of Strauss's line. The two tenor roles of Apollo and Leukippos, hitherto strongly characterized in music, have been most fortunately cast in William Lewis and Peter Jeffery. As Prometheus (Daphne's parents) Sean Rea sang ably, but Patricia Payne apparently found the lowest notes a cruel task.

Yet it is perhaps the orchestra of Opera North which most surprises the visiting critic with its excellence – on this as on other occasions. Woodwind and brass were particularly rich and precise, even if the alphas which Strauss added to the orchestration was missing (as it was, apparently, at the Dresden premiere). Though the force of strings was only about half what the composer prescribed, the total orchestral result paid tribute equally to the players' skill, Lloyd-Jones's mastery of balance, and the handsome acoustics of the Grand.

bronze of Glenda Jackson's Phedra.

For the student as well as the general visitor there is interest in the varied arrangement of the displays. Some are grouped by donor; others are devoted to single performers: Adeline Genée, Gordon Craig (dominated by William Rothenstein's fine portrait of him as a young Hamlet). There is a reconstructed dressing-room, a toy theatre shop. And the start of what will obviously be taking up the room of the future: performance records of the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company (as well as compelling images from the Old Vic of the war years like Richardson's towering Falstaff). Students of theatre might

perhaps diverge from the general public's wish for less emphasis on memorabilia to make room for other aspects of theatre history.

The hope for the future must lie in the regular changeover of exhibitions (with a range of tastes and needs in mind). And, above all, in the provision of adequate facilities for the researchers who have for so long now been off from the materials once available at the Victoria and Albert Museum. It will be something when the research room at the Theatre Museum comes into use, but the real need is for a speedy opening of the base at Olympia, where archival materials will have to be resorted to in the future.

Poetic possessions

Katherine Bucknell

All Roads Lead to France: Edward Thomas
1879-1917
Imperial War Museum, until September 6

This tribute to Edward Thomas on the twentieth anniversary of his death, April 9, 1917, in the Battle of Arras, will bring a tear to all but the most unsympathetic eye. Personal possessions, photographs, letters and manuscripts are modestly laid out in a small grey room. Excerpts from Thomas's poems float on the walls, piano music sounds in the air. The simplicity of the display lends it poignancy and seems well calculated to catch the interest of casual visitors to the War Museum who may be unacquainted with Thomas's work.

The exhibition divides Thomas's life in two: first, the family man, nature-lover, and prose writer; second, the poet and soldier. In the larger of two display cases, a table made by Thomas, a favourite chair, books from his library, and a manuscript of *Beautiful Wales* form a tableau of the man at work. Next to it are photographs and family memorabilia including a drawing of the house in Lambeth where Thomas was born, a revealing 1894 report from St. Paul's School (familiar from biographical accounts), an early book of "Field Notes", and an 1896 letter from Helen. A walking-stick and Ordnance Survey maps are displayed with first editions of several of Thomas's prose works. These and other items give no hint of the difficulties and sorrow of Thomas's family life, nor do they explain why he chose, as a mature poet, to leave all this for the army.

A second display case, which is perhaps of greater interest in admirers of Thomas's poetry, contains manuscripts of more than half a dozen poems including "Roads" and a first draft of "As the Tumb's Head-Brass". With these are a 1916 letter from Robert Frost and two letters to six-year-old Myfnydd Thomas, one including Thomas's well-known description of "Out in the Dark", the poem inspired by Myfnydd's night-time fears. The most vividly suggestive item in this group is a first draft of "The Trumpet" written at the Royal Artillery Barracks, Trowbridge, in September 1916. Gunner calculations fill half the sheet and the poem is written underneath in a solid block of long-hand like a letter. Thomas sent the poem to Eleanor Farjeon, exclaiming: "I have written it with only capitals to mark the lines because people are all around me and I don't want them to know."

In presenting Thomas as a war poet, the exhibition tends to overlook that he wrote one poem after leaving England. This was "Yeatsian 'The Sorrow of Love'", the draft of which appears on the last page of a diary played here with a miniature edition of Shakespeare and other possessions he carried in France. The cover and pages of the diary are badly eroded, apparently by the shell that killed Thomas.

Perhaps the most affecting piece in the exhibition is a letter of condolence from Dorothy Uzzell, the original of Thomas's "Lullaby". It was written to Thomas's death "was a blow to me and my family as all liked him of our town boys and as if it had been one of our own boys". He was a hero but some body had to be killed for us.

COMMENTARY

Chattering behind bars

Michael Hofmann

EUGENE O'NEILL
The Hairy Ape
Lyttelton Theatre

Two qualities characterize Peter Stein as a director: a fanatical attention to detail, and a seemingly limitless technical ambition. His production of *The Hairy Ape*, in his own admirably slangy German translation, is as intensive and extensive as anything I have ever seen: it is a staggering accomplishment, a cathedral display of theatrical vision and expertise.

When the curtain first rises, it reveals the proscenium arch entirely taken up with a riveted, grinding, uneasy surface of steel plates. When these eventually part, it is at a point some twenty or thirty feet above the stage, and it is at this unfamiliar and exhilarating height that we see the first scene unfold of Eugene O'Neill's anti-capitalist tragedy of the stoker Yank. There are sixteen stokers, stooped and grimy and stripped to the waist, bawling and drinking and playing music in their iron-fur-

nished cage in the steerage. They drift loosely and dangerously from one point of interest and authority to another, from Long, the socialist agitator – who pathetically stands up on a soapbox, which, in that confined space, means that he has to stand bent double – to Paddy, the old Irishman who has seen clipper ships, to Yank, their backbone and spirit and spokesman who declares himself alive by virtue of the twenty-five miles an hour his labour produces – without asking himself whom it benefits. O'Neill's strenuous stage-directions are carried out to the letter: the uproar "swelling into a sort of unity", the "Neanderthal" appearance of the men, and perhaps most crucially and powerfully, "except for slight differentiation . . . all these men are alike". Their matted hair hangs into faces dominated by high foreheads and prognathous jaws, their limbs resemble grey, oiled tubular steel, they do the ironic choruses (at the concepts of love, justice or God) "of hard, barking laughter" with a will, and even – a clever touch of Stein's – fall in with the conclusions of speeches, showing their utter familiarity with arguments that are as issueless as the cycle of labour in which they are trapped.

For the next scene, one has to crane one's



"Four studies of Miners at the Coalface", 1942, is on show at Marlborough Fine Art, 6 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BY, in the exhibition A Tribute to Henry Moore 1898-1986, until the end of June.

Savage laughter

H. R. Woudhuysen

SHAKESPEARE
Titus Andronicus
Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

In 1579 a middle-aged lawyer called John Stubbs was sentenced to public mutilation at Westminster for having written a "lawful and seditious" pamphlet against Queen Elizabeth's proposed marriage to the French king's brother. It took the executioner three blows to sever his right hand; but before Stubbs fainted he "put off his hat with his left and said with a loud voice, 'God save the Queen!'" Camden, who witnessed this appalling scene, records that "the multitude standing about was altogether silent, either out of horror of this new and unthought punishment, or else out of pity towards the man". About ten years later Shakespeare, still in his early twenties, displayed on the stage to *Titus Andronicus* the rape and mutilation of Lavinia, a young woman who has both hands and her tongue cut off in the needless sacrifice by a father, Titus, of his right hand and his reward for its loss with the heads of two of his sons; and the sight of two youths having their throats slit, their blood collected in a dish and used to the making of a drink which their mother and stepfather then eat.

An audience which watches the representation of these horrors for its entertainment and also the instruction might be expected to react as the multitude did when Stubbs lost his right hand – with horror and pity, but above all else in the knowledge that the tongueless Lavinia, so eloquent, but Shakespeare in neither a ritualistic, nor a symbolic, nor an

horror, pity and silence are not testing enough: the audience is also expected to laugh at what it sees, as Titus does at the height of his suffering when he has no more tears to shed, before he embarks on his career of assumed madness and hideous revenge.

In her Stratford debut as director, Deborah Warner succeeds powerfully in presenting a spectacle in which *Titus* has to be taken on its own terms, as it is – not for what it might once have been, nor for what it could be turned into. On a starkly bare stage, with a minimum of props, with costumes which discreetly manage not to draw attention to themselves and only a few highly effective lighting changes the play moves unerringly between high tragedy and the most painful comedy. The audience is allowed to laugh, but at the right moments, and is made to feel that here laughter need neither be innocent nor happy. The play's pace throughout is disciplined and well controlled with no slackening or falling off in the second half. Instead the production becomes more moving as *Titus* sinks down and is sucked in to become a deadly part of that Rome which he had earlier observed was "a wilderness of tigers". The audience in the Swan Theatre is clearly implicated in the action by the opening and closing scenes in which the unseen Romans are directly questioned from the stage about the succession of the crown. Nor is there much relief for it elsewhere in the production. With the exception of a large aluminium ladder to which Tamora's defeated sons are tied when they enter Rome and which turns up again when Aaron is to be hanged, and a rather bizarre preparation for the banquet by whilst a ring serpent, it keeps theatrical tricks to a minimum. It deliberately takes refuge in neither a ritualistic, nor a symbolic, nor an

neck even more: it is up on deck, and so, accordingly, at the very summit of the towering steel hull. Against a passerelle, with the ironic presence of a couple of foghorns next to them, are Mildred, sociologist, slum-voyeur and millionaire daughter of the owner of "Nazareth Steel", and her aunt and chaperone, viciously slugging each other off. Stein's interpretation of the text has them every bit as limited and entrapped as the stokers – their passerelle is only a more agreeable kind of cage – and they too are played as apes: always swaying and changing position, the vermillion munt with harpist pressed to her hip; even the wax-white, cloche-hatted, pneumatic Mildred belongs only to some particularly exquisite subspecies.

The pointing of these underlying affinities is a feature of the production. In O'Neill's text, it is only Yank and the stokers who are apes, and caged in steel; in Stein's brilliant interpretation, it is everyone: the capitalists and their feathered wives, screaming and squawking in the Fifth Avenue scene, the policemen falling over each other to club Yank, the prisoners in the "Zoo", the trade-unionists in their male nest, and the apes themselves. When Stein has the reactionary Senator Queen speak from a lofty balcony, we see with horror and disgust that his knee curls over the parapet in an uncontrollable simianism.

Lucio Fanti's astonishing designs, for all their breathtaking variety, always have steel bars as a kind of vestigial presence, while their savage inclines suggest the unfairness of society. Even the flat upper-deck of the calm voyage (the only scene, I think, played on a horizontal plane) allows the two women as little headroom as the stokers in their hold. Stein has made O'Neill's play deeper and darker; the class stereotypes are all poisoned, so that even revolution could change nothing of man's essential nature, of chattering in groups behind bars: the Industrial Workers of the World are played, scathingly, as a harmless horizontal act. The most human sounds are those produced by the apes in their cages, whimpering as Yank is killed; and the favourite pose of the gorilla is Rodin's "Thinker". Everyone associated with this production deserves to have their reputation enhanced: be they the Schaubühne Company, the West German Embassy, or Mercedes Benz.

abstract approach, yet its naturalism is kept in check – the really gruesome parts, the murders, the mutilations and the rape are appalling but credible: blood is used sparingly and almost always on spotlessly white linen. Similarly the production avoids turning the play into a noisy piece of rhetorical bluster; not all the speaking of verse is entirely satisfactory but it rarely lapses into stylistic self-consciousness.

The marvellous economy of the production places a great burden on the actors, most of all on Brian Cox's stooping, almost dancing Titus, who moves with great conviction and dignity from a soldierly obliviousness to what anyone says to him, on to a kind of tragic grandeur. Equally Estelle Kohler's fluent and mature performance as Tamora, whose words cover up for her deeds, is well matched against the speechless gestures of Sonia Ritter's Lavinia and the fading power of her husband Saturninus (Jim Hooper). What the production most disappointingly lacks is on Aaron who can convey the theatrical glamour of evil: Pater Poly-carpou is too pale to have "A joyless, dismal, black and sorrowful issue" and too decent to enjoy the wickedness he should revel in. Far more convincing in this respect are Tamora's thuggish public-school-educated sons Demetrius and Chiron (Piers Ibbotson and Richard McCabe), who squirm gloomily back on stage with their hands hidden in their sleeves, sickeningly parodying their mutilation of Lavinia after her rape.

This *Titus Andronicus* retains its power to shock (Titus kills Lavinia when she is sitting on his lap, his handless stump on her shoulder, effortlessly twisting her neck and breaking it with an audible snap), by presenting what should not be seen and by reminding the audience of the grim humourousness of the obscene.

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Jude 10 1986

Changing the canon

Brian Lee

DONALD McQUADE, ROBERT ATWAN, MARTHA BANTA, JUSTIN KAPLAN, DAVID MINTER, CECILIA TICHY and HELEN VENDER (Editors)
The Harper American Literature
Volume One, 2,430pp. 0 06 044367 7
Volume Two, 2,902pp. 0 06 044368 5
Harper and Row. Paperback, £18 each.

"We were the biggest people and we ought to have the biggest conceptions." This familiar American sentiment was expressed in 1876 by one of Henry James's fictional artists, Roderick Hudson, who went on to add that the biggest conceptions would bring forth in time the biggest performances. Time was to prove him right, of course, though in fact there had been some pretty big performances in American literature already, including *Moby-Dick* and the ever-expanding *Leaves of Grass*. During the next hundred years, these would be joined by such leviathans as *An American Tragedy*, *U.S.A.*, *Silver*, *Longfellow*, *The Cenci*, *Of Time and the River*, *The Recognition*, *Ancient Evenings*, *Gravely's Rainbow*, and, not least, by James's own late, baggy monsters. It is little wonder, then, that this anthology, *The Harper American Literature*, is also a very big performance, containing within its two volumes 5,300 densely packed pages of poetry and prose. Yet, with the exception of Whitman's masterpiece—which is printed in full in the 1855 version, together with selections from the *Deathbed edition*—none of the other texts mentioned here is represented by more than brief excerpts. Alternatively, their creators are sometimes exhibited by work in different forms, such as *New Journalism* (Mailer), the novella (James), or the short story (Pynchon). Others, like Farrell and Gaddis, are left out altogether. Such distortions and omissions are inevitable in any selection, however large, and the reason for making this point is not in order to find fault with the editors, but rather to indicate the sheer impossibility of the task they set themselves. Indeed, the scholars who worked on this project deserve congratulating on the number of full, representative texts they have contrived to squeeze into the collection. These include *Walden*, *Billy Budd*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Daisy Miller*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Edith Wharton's Summer*, *The Waste Land*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Seize the Day*, *O'Neill's Hughie*, and *David Mamet's The Vermont Sketches*. Moreover, the anthologies of Post-war and Contemporary poetry are themselves well worth the cost of the second volume. Judged purely in terms of size, the collection as a whole is excellent value for money, and will undoubtedly displace its competitors in college classrooms throughout America.

But a production of this kind has a significance reaching beyond its economy and flexibility as a teaching resource. What distinguishes it from its predecessors, according to the General Editor, is a determination "to extend the conventional boundaries of the American literary tradition". What is not made clear in

the preface is that there is an equally deliberate attempt in some areas to restrict those conventional boundaries by excluding certain writers, and thereby minimizing the importance of the schools or movements they represent. In seeking to change the canon of American literature the Harper anthology is likely to have as profound an effect upon literary history and criticism as that produced by the textbooks of the New Critics forty years ago. And it is in terms of such probable consequences that it must ultimately be judged.

It could be argued that this editorial policy reflects changes that have already taken place in the world of American letters, and to some extent this is true. In expanding the temporal dimensions of the subject the editors demonstrate their awareness of a growing dissatisfaction with those accounts of American literature which locate its origins so firmly in the Puritan tradition. As a corrective to this narrow North-eastern bias, they reprint not only a selection of records by early European voyagers and coastal navigators from Columbus to Samuel de Champlain, but also various Native American Creation Myths and stories of first encounters. And, at the other end of the time scale, they provide a very generous amount of space for post-war writing, over a thousand pages being given over to the work of seventy-five authors from Nabokov to Rita Dove. What emerges from these Pre-Colonial and Post-Modernist extensions is not just a new map of literary history, but also, for the careful reader, a different *periphrasis* created by the many new alignments and reorientations involved in the experience of navigating unfamiliar terrain.

The same could also be claimed for the anthology's other distinctive feature, its "pluralistic realism". This phrase, borrowed from Nathan Huggins, is used to describe the range and variety of different voices incorporated in the collection. Works by women, blacks, Asian-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Native-Americans are discussed, presented, and blended with more traditional texts in such a way that they can be heard "as more than simply statistical responses or intellectual concessions to contemporary propriety". And, while the reconstruction of American literary history implied by such a shift is nothing like as radical as that suggested more than ten years ago by Jerome Rothenberg and George Quasha in their innovative anthology, *American A Prophecy*, it does indicate the kind of changes that are taking place in the literary establishment. If there is any evidence of an intellectual concession to contemporary propriety, it is to be found in those sections such as "The Literature of Contemporary America: Prose", where work by women, black and white, is represented far more fully than that of any other minority group. Though an excellent case can be made for the inclusion of each and every one of them (Grace Paley, Toni Morrison, Bobbie Ann Mason, Maxine Hong Kingston, Alice Walker, Ann Beattie, and Leslie Marmon Silko), and is indeed made by David Minter, the editor, one cannot help but regret the omission of such significant talents as that of Ishmael Reed.

A much more worrying omission, however, disfigures what is otherwise an excellent anthology of post-war American poetry. In her introduction to this section, Helen Vender carefully describes and assesses each school of poetry: the Confessionals, the Beats, the New York poets, and the Deep Image poets, before going on to print generous selections from their individual members. But, when she arrives at the Black Mountain group, her generosity fails her, and the entire school is summarily dismissed for deriving "perhaps too closely" from Pound. No one would dispute her right to hold such an opinion, but having expressed it so cursorily in her essay, it would have been charitable of her to have at least given readers

an opportunity to test the judgment by printing something by Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, or Denise Levertov. Her failure to do so smacks not so much of eccentricity, as of a serious departure from the principle of eclecticism that informs the entire anthology. Gertrude Stein, a writer who is accorded her due recognition in this book, maintained that the business of art is to express completely the complete actual present. Black Mountain College and its poets made a significant contribution to just such an expression at a critical moment in America's history. It would be gratifying to think that this might be acknowledged more handsomely in future editions.

Writing to a formula

Mark Abley

CHRISTINE BOLD
Selling the Wild West: Popular western fiction, 1869-1960
215pp. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, \$27.50.
0 253 35151 0

"A writer", William Wallace Cook once explained, "is a manufacturer. After gathering his raw product, he puts it through the mill of his imagination, retools from the mass the personal equation, refines it with a sufficient amount of common sense and runs it into bars of bullion, let us say. If the product is good it passes at face value and becomes a medium of exchange." Cook was a manufacturer himself; for thirty-five years he milled and retooled and refined for Street and Smith Ltd, one of America's foremost publishers of dime novels and pulp fiction. He forged Westerns, detective stories, tearjerkers: whatever he was paid to produce, and under a multiplicity of pen-names. Often his publishers provided him in advance with a title, a plot and a synopsis. An author such as Cook "belonged to the publishers", Christine Bold observes; "he was only one element in the material which they shaped for the market". The central contention of her wily, alert study *Selling the Wild West* is that the tension between a publisher's formula and an author's imagination offers the true suspense of a Western.

Bold recapitulates the history of the genre, from James Fenimore Cooper's classic romances of the frontier to the literary "anti-Westerns" that Edward Abbey, E. L. Doctorow, Ishmael Reed and other novelists have created in the past quarter-century. Distance from their subject-matter was in many cases a blessing for the practitioners of Westerns; a turn-of-the-century writer called Emerson Hough had been, Bold speculates, too close to real life on the frontier for him to adhere entirely to the formula. Bold is very much a critic for the 1980s: keen-eyed for every discordance, stress or hesitation, and willing to extrapolate at length on everything from Zane Grey's semi-colons to the footnotes of Louis L'Amour. Her prose is annoying and peripatetic in about equal parts. For every instance of post-structuralist hyperbole ("The *Unforgotten* shows how the diagrammatic quality of language can become its primary meaning in the formulaic text"), she has an inclusive perception ("The frame which surrounds

painted figures was important in all [Remington's] work, for he made a boundary line the major structuring principle in his fiction as well as his art"). Yet Bold gives little sense of enjoyment of her vast material, and her strongest adjective of praise appears to be "clever".

The cleverest aspect of her own writing is the adroit way in which *Selling the Wild West* blends linguistic, literary, biographical and historical analysis of the Western genre. At moments she teeters on the brink of a political analysis too: "it becomes clear that the different kinds of power offered to readers are actually the bait by which the publishers fitted their audience into their commercial scheme". Unfortunately, she shies away from examining many of the political questions raised by Westerns, and especially by the work of the enormously successful Louis L'Amour, at least fifty-five of whose books have sold more than a million copies each. Bold quotes one of L'Amour's heroes, who believes that "the feeding time comes around there's nothing hawk likes better than a nice fat, peaceful dove". But she fails to ask whether the unabridged individualism, the constant resort to violence, the contempt for most of mankind, and the distrust of friendship, tenderness and communal effort in L'Amour's writings make him a dangerous as well as an inadequate fabulist. This is the man who, in Ronald Reagan's America, became the first novelist ever to receive a Congressional gold medal, and who in 1964 was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

For Bold, the few Western writers who stand out from the competing horde are those who take the conventions of the form as their implicit subject. She admires Alan Le May's novel *The Searchers* for "detaching the signifier from its signification". But for a reader of *Selling the Wild West* the most memorable and haunting figure is that of Frederick Faust, whose output makes even Louis L'Amour seem sluggish. Under twenty pseudonyms Faust published 196 novels, 226 novelettes, and 162 stories. Dr Kildare was one of his creations; in the realm of the Western, where he used the name "Max Brand", he originated the Montana Kid, Silverdrip, Dan Barry and many other heroes. Yet Faust had become a novelist only as a way of supporting his beloved poetry. Christine Bold discerns in his Westerns "increasingly strong mythical patterns" and an "increasingly strong tone of irony". But the strongest impression her chapter about him conveys is of a man who suffered torments because of his self-betrayal as a writer whose manufacturing destroyed what he had valued most.

The Floral Costumier by JOHN MOLE

(after Duffy)
Open his scented
wardrobe, find
the little silken
arum lilies.

From their green
hangers they
drift towards you
blowing kisses.

There is the soft
art of brightness
in its own right
to your ankles.

or the sweetness
rising, moist
and downy between
lip and lip.

They are his fingers'
dream of nakedness
made flesh,
an incarnation

of their touch
from root to blossom
love's amazement
and a perfect fit.

Masked correspondent, man of silence

Helen McNeil

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distributed in the UK by Eurospan. £27.50.
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Elliot
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0 7022 1689 5

Of all the nineteenth-century American writers who were honoured by their contemporaries, only Hawthorne, seen by modern readers as attractively ambiguous, has survived with his literary reputation undiminished. The continuing prominence of Hawthorne's tales and romances contrasts, however, with the fate of his letters, which have been lost, bowdlerized and misread virtually from the moment of their composition. These two volumes, part of the Ohio State Centenary Edition of Hawthorne's works, make up most of what is the first complete collection of his letters.

The imbalance between fiction and letters is a direct consequence of Hawthorne's fame during his lifetime. The uncertain status of letters, notebooks and diaries as literary artefacts and the physical possession of unique copies by family and associates means that these "personal" writings can be slaved down until they fit the shape of public contemporary fame. (Anyone who thinks this was an exclusively Victorian practice should check the provenance of Sylvia Plath's *Letters Home*.) Hawthorne, however, seems to have been trimmed more visibly than most. For his 1884 biography, Julian Hawthorne used carefully selected passages from his father's letters. Sophia Peabody Hawthorne cut and inked out large sections of her husband's letters and notebooks, but carefully preserved the remaining fragments as evidence of their great love and Hawthorne's great sensibility. When Henry James inspected the notebooks he found them "excited little comment".

Our image of Hawthorne must be changed by these hundreds of letters from his youth and his most productive years as a writer. It is, however, only one of this collection's many treasures: that the letters display the marks of censorship, contradiction, cunning and absence. The novelty is that these qualities can no longer be attributed solely to meddlesome editors; they must now be ascribed to Hawthorne himself as well.

The other group of Hawthorne's intimate correspondents were the lifelong friends he made at Bowdoin College: the "best friend", generous, hearty Horatio Bridge, who became a naval purser; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (at college only an acquaintance); and Jonathan Cilley, who was killed in a duel in 1838. The image of a Hawthorne who, as Henry James put it, "ignored the good society of his native place almost completely" was partly created by Hawthorne's own editing of his life. Whether by choice or by accident, no letters to Cilley survive; Bridge obligingly destroyed many sent to him, and censored others. The record of Hawthorne's unsuccessful courtship of Mary

Thorne's letters are deliberate presentations of self for specific ends. Hawthorne knew his audiences. The letters mediate, protect, hide, cosset and deny, always in relation to what must have been a vividly imagined other; they are so precisely geared to their recipients' needs and expectations, their style and tone so well chosen to achieve the desired effect, it is no wonder he felt "it is of no use trying to say any real thing in a letter".

Very occasionally Hawthorne uses a correspondent as a pretext for expressing some inner doubt. Sending J. T. Fields the finished manuscript of *The Scarlet Letter*, he wishes he could have relieved the "shadow of the story" with "so much light as I would gladly have thrown in". The wish imputes to his audience and publisher a need for sunniness which Hawthorne also felt himself. *The Scarlet Letter* was well received, but Hawthorne again seized upon Fields to say that he would have liked to "pour some setting sunshine" over the conclusion of *The House of the Seven Gables*.

Hawthorne's more intimate letters indicate that he was not a man who could balance many attachments, and that his strongest bonds were formed early. The first hints of sensitivity, if not yet of talent, come in the unhappy letters Hawthorne sent his mother when he was first at boarding-school. "Why was I not a girl that I might have been pined all my life to my mother's apron?" The pull of a reclusive, needy mother, widowed when Hawthorne was four, and two sisters who never married, gave Hawthorne an early and lasting sense of guilty inadequacy. To Elizabeth, his intelligent and literary older sister, he wrote the bitter post-graduation letter presaging his incredible exhibition of negative will over the next twelve years: "[I] shall never realise" the family's high "opinion of my talents . . . I shall never make a distinguished figure in the world." He will not leave home or enter a profession during this period, he will not earn a living despite his mother's straitened means, and he will also not stop writing, though he destroys much of what he writes, including letters. Only twelve survive for the period 1825-36.

The family letters were naturally few while Hawthorne lived at home in Salem, but when they resumed after his marriage, the intimacy was gone. Hawthorne hid his three-year engagement to the eminently acceptable Sophia Peabody until a few months before they married. A pained letter from Elizabeth to Sophia, one of several family letters reprinted as notes, records the hurt this secrecy caused: "I do not recognize [Nathaniel's] right to speak of truth, after keeping us so long in ignorance of this affair . . . It was especially due to my mother that she should long ago have been acquainted with the engagement of her only son." Hawthorne underscored the rift by refusing to let Sophia call his mother "mother" or his sisters "sister". She took up the familiarity anyway, often penning Hawthorne's refusals for him.

After the Hawthornes' first child, Una, was born, it is Sophia who writes to Hawthorne's more tractable younger sister Louisa that they will wait until the baby is five months old before visiting Salem, even though she and Una are about to travel to Boston. Hawthorne adds at the bottom: "Write immediately, I have fully made up my mind not to visit at present." Sophia's sweet diplomacy was meant to suggest to her in-laws that she was in command of the domestic situation. It does seem from the letters, however, that once Hawthorne found happiness with his wife, he dropped his first, familial set of women as if they were bad memories of his years in what the notebooks call "this dismal and squall chamber".

The other group of Hawthorne's intimate correspondents were the lifelong friends he made at Bowdoin College: the "best friend", generous, hearty Horatio Bridge, who became a naval purser; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (at college only an acquaintance); and Jonathan Cilley, who was killed in a duel in 1838. The image of a Hawthorne who, as Henry James put it, "ignored the good society of his native place almost completely" was partly created by Hawthorne's own editing of his life. Whether by choice or by accident, no letters to Cilley survive; Bridge obligingly destroyed many sent to him, and censored others. The record of Hawthorne's unsuccessful courtship of Mary

Silbee survives only in a sardonic account (to J. L. O'Sullivan) of their last meeting. In this letter Hawthorne uses a measured Johnsonian cadence to represent his writerly superiority to the lady's performance skills, which even so "altogether constituted a perfect work of art".

For a literary man Hawthorne wrote few literary letters, or few that survive. He shows little interest in abstract thought or criticism. While other writers are occasionally mentioned, they are friends or sources or youthful reading (Scott, Southey, etc) or in the current literary periodicals, which Hawthorne does seem to have read with great care. Nor is he readily allusive. Spenser, whose allegorical imagination was one of his major models, is mentioned lightly, as are Shakespeare, Cervantes and the Bible; they serve as sources for tags, with the source spelled out if the recipient is not literary. In a cunningly diffident letter to Longfellow in 1836, Hawthorne wrote that he had "indeed, turned over a great many books, but in so desultory a way that it cannot be called study, nor has it left me the fruits of study". He then offered Longfellow a hostage to interpretation by advancing the line that his life of "no external excitement" in Salem had made him almost unfit for writing—almost, but not quite, since he knew (but didn't tell Longfellow) that he had by then already written the stories of *Twice-Told Tales*, which were to bring him to public notice. The purpose of the letter was to reacquaint Longfellow with him in hopes of the future favourable review that Longfellow did indeed write. For this purpose, Longfellow's playful use of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* to compare Hawthorne's "environments" with those of the German Romantic Jean Paul was inadequate, so Hawthorne replaced it with his own fiction of himself.

Like his fiction, Hawthorne's letters do not offer extended or detailed scene-painting; that was to be the work of the notebooks. Instead of landscape there is considerable attention to emotional spirit of place. To Evert Duyckinck, who had just sent on some British praise of *Twice-Told Tales*, Hawthorne wrote a lovely evocation of his life in 1842 at the Old Manse near Concord:

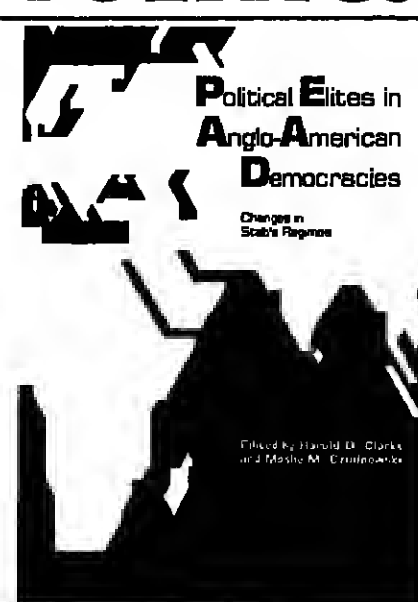
I live in an old parsonage, the most quiet place, I believe, in the whole world, with woods close at hand, and a river at the bottom of my orchard, and an old battle-field under my window. Everybody that comes here falls asleep, there is such an unearthly quiet; but for my own part, I feel as if, for the first time in my life, I was awake. I have found a really, though it looks very much like some of my old dreams.

The letter is a perfect portrait of the Romantic artist at peace, with Sophia edited out; it is also perfectly aimed at the influential editor Duyckinck. Duyckinck published the Library of American Books series, which opened with Horatio Bridge's *Journal of an African Crusade*, edited by Hawthorne, and went on to publish Poe, Melville, and eventually Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Duyckinck did not publish Thoreau; Hawthorne used the influence he had established by 1845 to punctuate what he felt was Thoreau's pretentiousness: "He is the most unmanageable fellow alive—the most tedious, tiresome, and intolerable—the narrowest and most notional."

The greatest absence among Hawthorne's letters is his apparently lost correspondence with Herman Melville, whom he met in 1851 through Duyckinck. Hawthorne's notebooks make it clear that Melville arrived too late in his life for the passionate discourse which Melville desperately wanted. The surviving letters, while not profound, show by their very amiability a greater ease than might have been assumed: Elizabeth Melville and Sophia Hawthorne got on well; the men enjoyed riding together; Hawthorne asked Melville to look out for a box waiting at the post office in Pittsfield, and if possible to buy him a kitchen-cup while he is in town. Even so, Hawthorne's notably bland tone in these letters must have been aimed at cooling off Melville. If there were letters in which Hawthorne took on the implications of his influence on the composition of *Moby-Dick*, they would have been unique in his practice.

In the session on these letters at the recent Modern Language Association conference to New York, Nina Baym remarked that the real Hawthorne was not necessarily any more present in his letters than in his other writings. Indeed,

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since letters are arguably the most audience-conscious kind of composition, they may well be less "real" than the notebooks which, at least until his marriage, Hawthorne wrote for himself alone. In his study *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Lionel Trilling argued that Romantic sincerity always involves the representation of oneself as sincere to an audience; authenticity, by contrast, is inner, a self-directed goal. In Trilling's terminology, some of Hawthorne's letters are sincere, particularly those to Sophia — though a Romantic lover would also wish to be seen to be sincere. But by definition none can be authentic.

A conflict between inner and outer, or between self and the social manifestations of self, is the theme of many of Hawthorne's fictions and notebook meditations, but in the letters that conflict is being enacted. The 1842 letter interdicting the term "mother" displayed a neurotic drive to control intimacies by keeping them separate. That drive is, however, linked to a powerful argument in which intimacy and its expression in speech are felt to be incompatible. Hawthorne begins with family practices:

We are conscious of one another's feelings, always; but there seems to be a tacit law, that our deepest heart-concerns are not to be spoken of. I cannot gush out in their presence — I cannot take my heart in my hand and show it to them. There is a feeling within me (though I know it is a foolish one) as if it would be as indecent to do so, as to display to them the naked breast.

Hawthorne wonders if this "incapacity of free communion" is a punishment "for something wrong in our early intercourse" — whether of the family or of humankind he does not specify. But he accepts this fallen condition because it yields him the gift of wordless intimacy:

I doubt whether I ever have really spoken of thee, to any person. I have spoken the name of Sophia, it is true; but the idea in my mind was apart from thee — it embraced nothing of thine inner and essential self; it was an outward and faintly-traced shadow that I summoned up, to perform thy part.

The imagery of "The Snow-Image" and *The Scarlet Letter* (among others) is intimately in this letter. If such a radical Platonism infuses Hawthorne's view of language, then any willed expression would have been seen by him as tinged with falsehood. It must be so because it is communication rather than communion.

Like Emily Dickinson a generation later, Hawthorne practised a profoundly "written" art. He never relished American vernacular, as Emerson and Whitman did, and he loathed the mid-century oratorical mode. Sophia found his conversation "marmoreal", by which she meant that it had the clarity, purity and timelessness she associated with literary classics.

Hawthorne believed language to be the dress of thought, rather than thought itself; his fictions and prefaces sought to approximate invisible and inexpressible thoughts through the homage of appropriately transparent language. Writing may then commune with its epistemological origins. He did not consider that writing could, or should, represent material reality directly or that it should purport to take its form from immediate social phenomena. Such a refusal of the social contract of discourse meant, among other things, that Hawthorne kept his audience at a distance even when (as the letters indicate) some of his readers did recognize and admire at least the general tendency of his style.

Hawthorne's view of writing meant that for something merely to be written was not a guarantee of authenticity. The non-literariness of letters could actually make them less, rather than more, authentic, if they were designed, like oratorical rhetoric, to convince a specific audience. The usual paradigms of literary artificiality and spontaneity do not seem to work on Hawthorne. Perhaps, too, this primacy of the written may hint at the deep necessity of symbolic language for Hawthorne's fiction. In Bakhtin's terms, Hawthorne is a monologic writer, with symbolism and narrative outweighing discourse. Yet he does not exploit his omnipotent authority, preferring instead to ascribe power to symbols: these images resonate in the thought of everyone in a society, but their full meaning is never speech. The more meanings the people of Salem offer for

Hester's scarlet letter, the more it grows beyond anyone's grasp. Perhaps behind the monologic novelist and the diffident, masked correspondent stands the figure of the silent writer. Certainly, if the chimerical "real" Hawthorne exists, it is as a man of silence.

Many of Sophia's excisions have an exciting effect on modern readers. In 1839, for example, Sophia had a nasty cold which Hawthorne felt he knew how to cure: "I really do feel as if I could cure her, [excision] kiss that should [excision] enquire better into her bosom, more entirely than any kiss ever did before." This comedy of repression arises from Sophia's all-too-conscious efforts to excise what was communion, and therefore not to be spoken of, and to make public property of what was conventional. At the close of the second volume of letters, when Hawthorne is a successful public man, trading favours in his friend Pierce's administration, there is no need for excisions, since the discourse already consists of materialist shadows.

The letters are splendidly edited in this library edition. My one complaint is that the running commentary on Hawthorne's correspondents forces the reader who has not memorized it to search for identifications; an alphabetical listing and perhaps family trees of the Hawthornes and Peabodys would have been helpful.

New Essays on "The Scarlet Letter" begins with the series editor wearily informing us that "In literary criticism the last twenty-five years have been particularly fruitful." The introductory essay by Michael Colacurcio, who edited this collection, gives a thorough history of Hawthorne criticism, while quietly regretting what he finds to be the anti-humanist trend of recent deconstructionist readings. The stage seems set for a collection of study aids, but instead come four long revisionist essays, most of which increase our appreciation of Hawthorne's deviousness. Michael Davitt Bell offers a powerful radical re-reading of the Custom House Preface; it is "not a straightforward declaration of artistic intention, and . . . certainly not a theoretical definition of a distinctive

ively American mode of fiction". David van Leer sees *The Scarlet Letter* as an attack on the powers of sympathy which its narrative voice purports to praise, while Colacurcio argues for an unliberated, Winthropesque narrator. Carol Bensink takes the easier task (after Tony Tanner's *Adultery and the Novel*) of comparing Hawthorne's and Tolstoy's novels of adultery, finding a surprising "comprehensive naturalism" in Hawthorne.

The other studies all deal with questions of influence. The undergraduate Hawthorne who grumbled to his sister about being "compelled to go to meeting every Sunday, and to hear a red hot Calvinist sermon from the President, or some other dealer in fire and brimstone" does not seem a likely protagonist for Agnes McNeill Donohue's *Hawthorne: Calvin's ironic stepchild*. In the letters, Hawthorne's strongest affinity is with the Quakers; he twice expresses a rather more than joking interest in joining the Society of Friends, and his love letters significantly adopt the Quaker "thou" in their form of address.

The letters are, however, not the whole Hawthorne, and Donohue offers thematic readings of many of Hawthorne's tales of innate depravity, and of *The Scarlet Letter*, which Hawthorne described to Fields as "positively a b-l-f-d story". Donohue cites Calvin's Institutes but does not deal with the question of the historic survival of Calvinist theology into the nineteenth century. The secular Hawthorne, and much recent Hawthorne criticism, is ignored. The argument is marred by an excessively knowing attitude about the Hawthornes' personalities — for example, Sophia was "the eternal featherheaded optimist", while "He wanted to die". It is more likely that Hawthorne worked up Puritanism as a historical correlative for guilts and doubts that were personal. As Bell showed in *Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England*, the precedents for such "use" of Puritanism were numerous.

Samuel Chase Coale's *In Hawthorne's Shadow: American romance from Melville to Moller* begins appropriately by quoting Haw-

thorne's "Inst" notebook on the "fund of evil in every human heart". His study adopts Richard Chase's definition of an American romance genre somewhat uncritically, and some of his speculations would better have been left out. The book's effort is, however, not to write a history of romance, gothic, or Calvinism but to sketch a less specifically generic line of dark metaphysics forward from Hawthorne through Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Norman Mailer, John Gurdener, Joyce Carol Oates and, less predictably, John Cheever, John Updike and John Didion. It is debatable whether such a broad line should be attributed to a single literary influence, and if so, whether Hawthorne or Charles Brockden Brown was the American progenitor. By offering such a broad foreground for much recent writing Coale mounts an implicit attack on a post-modernist reading of contemporary American fiction. Since he finished his study, new evidence of Hawthorne's shadow has appeared in Roger's Version, John Updike's magnificent rewrite of *The Scarlet Letter*.

In *Dickens the Novelist* Q. D. Leavis speculated that Dickens might have used the "highly stylized settings" of *The Scarlet Letter* as the basis for the "simple settings", salvational conclusion and sense of guilt in *Great Expectations*. Edward Stokes's *Hawthorne's Influence on Dickens and George Eliot* makes the factual case for such transatlantic influence, though he sees it more in *Bleak House*. The case with George Eliot is even clearer, though also hitherto underemphasized. In 1852 she declared Hawthorne "a great favourite of mine". Not only do Arthur Donnithorne and Hester (Hetty) Sorrel owe their names to Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne, but the structure of *Adam Bede*, with its prison interview and silent heroines, is also indebted to *The Scarlet Letter*, though it is perhaps more of a critical revision than a homage. Stokes's study is cautious and sometimes stilted, but makes a contribution to the growing case for more equally weighted cultural interdependence of Britain and the United States in the nineteenth century.

his third book in a methodical progress through the Melville canon. He knows the literature and deploys it with consideration. He is committed to reading carefully and arguing logically. In all, this is a book that might have been written twenty years ago but is not in the least out of date, nor will it be for a long time to come.

Robert Martin's monograph on male friendship in Melville's sea novels is more a product of the times. While there are few readers who have not been led to muse on the haunting henchy of Billy Budd or the wedding night of Ishmael and Queequeg, only recently has it been possible to treat the homosexual dimension in Melville with ease. Martin does so, and with subtlety, candour and compassion. He identifies three basic characters in the sea novels: the hero or experiencing self; the dark stranger, an erotic and mythic force of nature; and the captain, the repressive legal authority, and charts their interplay beginning with *Typee* (not precisely a "sea novel") and featuring *Redburn*, *White-Jacket*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Billy Budd*. His readings enhance our grasp of the text but he has extra-literary objectives towards which, for example, he leads Billy Budd.

Dillingham reminds us that as Melville composed *Billy Budd*, he had before him a memo copied out to his own boat: "Keep true to the dreams of thy youth." Dillingham's emphasis on Captain Vere's failure to keep true, Martin, however, is concerned with Billy's failure to charge is that Billy "declines to rebel, out of loyalty to a false system" and since his "appeal is pederastic . . . he is therefore inadequate as the locus of the erotic energy that Melville felt necessary to combat tyranny". In the case of *Moby-Dick*, Martin concludes that "it is not alone, as manifested in the marriage of Ishmael and Queequeg, that can offer an alternative to the impending apocalypse" and this leads him to assert that "Melville seriously believed in the radical social potential of male sexuality as a force in the creation of a new egalitarian society".

Despite his application of erotic logic and his sometimes "unconventional" readings, Dillingham is a critic of the older sort. This is

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"He is a poet of the utmost ambition and the utmost care; he is prolific; and he is at an age when most poets have only just begun to find a voice," wrote Helen Vendler of Dave Smith's *Cumtrent Station*, published in 1976. *Cumtrent Station* was Smith's breakthrough volume; its technical perfections won critical reviews across the United States, and Smith was generally recognized as the leading poet of his generation. His subsequent work determinedly set about fulfilling that promise, but often in an oblique, not wholly satisfactory way. His two most recent books, *Homage to Edgar Allan Poe* (1981) and *In the House of the Judge* (1983), although both spectacularly crafted, belong in the end in some ways to the divine average, "Top Quality Creative Writing" stamped on every page.

Smith, of course, has been heavily involved in Creative Writing Programs since they first began to mushroom in the mid-1970s, and remained in *Local Assays*, a collection of miscellaneous prose pieces, are two essays defending them as articulately as they are ever likely to be defended, not with the usual lama analogies to the workshops of Quattrocento Italy, but as serious moral institutions "entrusted with education, recording and even sustaining the best that will be thought or felt about human nature". For the students they are an unmitigated blessing, but Smith is less sure of their benefits to the poet-teacher who may "give his own censor and his own energies so fully to his students that he has little left for his own work". But this surely undermines his whole argument. In a recent anthology of around 100 younger American poets edited by Smith and David Bottoms, only the merest handful didn't lack creative writing. In this light, mightn't the system behave more like some Kafkaesque labyrinth that offers early encouragement only to extort a long and stifling revenge?

To anyone familiar with Smith's work there are few surprises in the preferences underlying this collection. In a rather pompous apologia he outlines the duties of "good responsible writing" as "unity, clarity, totality, and purpose". Before skirmishing briefly with the avant-garde, and all forms of minimalism; Olson is eccentric and Creeley stunted; *Flanery Wake*, much of Beckett, and almost anything called Surreal is terminally boring; John Ashbery, John Hollander and James Merrill are dismissed out of hand. Smith's ideal poet is more like a sporting hero. Extended comparisons are drawn throughout with baseball, football, basketball and boxing, and the theory advanced that most of America's best poets are jocks; Jarrell, tennis; Kumin, swimming; Olson, Frost; Whitman, baseball.

A large part of the book is devoted to critical pieces drawn from *Poetry* and *American Poetry Review*. Smith's policy is to review only what he likes, so there are more tributes than assessments. He writes excellently on Robert Penn Warren, whom he ranks above Robert Lowell, and on Richard Hugo, whom he links with Willie Sargent of the Pirates, and on Louis Simpson. In search of the American Self, "James Wright: The Quest for Home". The interviews "updated". These are all top-calibre poets but no one really escapes the bland and predictable here. This is a lovely special interest only.

Smith and the whole, though, both an honest and a sympathetic reviewer, and aside from a few criticisms at Adrienne Rich is "a self-appointed Equal Opportunities Officer" there is no bitchiness in his voice. His omnibus reviews of ephemeral contemporaries have none of the irresponsible glee that exhilarates Jarrell's dabbling among the dunces. This whole volume, in fact, testifies to an impassioned, hard-working integrity that can only consolidate his position as the Joe Montana of the poetry scene.

Lewis Putnam Turco and Jonathan Holden are also poets but, being professional critics as well, their readings of the American tradition are far more scholarly and historical than Smith's. Both offer extensive revisions of prevailing standards. Turco's in *Visions and Revisions of American Poetry* is the more radical stance, a fiercely formalist rejection of the whole conception of organic poetry as it derives from Emerson. Whitman he considers a large and costly mistake. The roots of his thesis, though, extend back to the earliest period of American poetry when the professional versus amateur debate, the "makers" against the "visionaries", was already being entered by Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor. A century later Phyllis Wheatley struck a blow for the professionals—all women are professionals, all men can get away with the effeminate slop of Transcendentalism—but with the emergence of Bryant and Emerson in the earlier nineteenth century, the noose was complete. And that Emerson and Whitman triumphed at all was due mainly to public relations and the tandem strategy they lifted from Wordsworth and Coleridge—agonist and poet, publicist and product. Not until the arrival of that other fearsome duo, Eliot and Pound, were the tides to be rolled back. Turco bounces his themes off unlikely texts—principally Alfred Kreyenbourg's *Our Singing Strength* (1927) and the work of Hyatt Waggoner. They add an illusion of solidity to his arguments, and act as a launching-pad for his dizzier speculations.

It is possible to disagree with everything Turco says and still find this book superbly engrossing. In this he is like Bateson, and these are really essays in critical dissent. The heresies are innumerable, and not always explained: "Dryden was a rather uniformly bad writer . . . It is patent that Samuel Johnson was not a great writer . . ." and so on. His discussion of Stevens is particularly wilful; it sets him first "at the opposite pole from Emerson", rejects his later work as "sterile", and finally prefers Conrad Aiken altogether. That should go down well in New Haven. Yet in the process he says a great many interesting things. This is typical of a book that is brilliantly written, continually challenging, and almost always wrong.

Holden's *Style and Authenticity in Postmodern Poetry* is altogether more solid. Like Emerson, Holden trained first as a mathematician, but where Emerson tends to transfigure his texts, Holden demystifies. He is as upset as Turco by talk of free form, but he seeks a more practical solution in the idea of contexts buried but implicit in the poem. Nothing exists in a vacuum. This is an obvious point, but Holden's demonstrations of the interdependencies of all poetry draw refreshingly on young, less well-known poets—Gary Gildner, Ted Kooser, Reg Saner—and are always perceptive.

Richard Hugo emerges, again, as the representative major poet, though Simpson, William Stafford, and Philip Levine also score well. Ashbery is castigated for being too remote from common experience, and Robert Bly for trying to get too close to it. This is in the end, though, a rather negative definition of postmodernism, as racked by nostalgia for an earlier innocence and grandeur, and one that ignores many of the more interesting experiments of recent years.

Peter Stitt's *The World's Hieroglyphic Beauty* has an original format, pairing essays on and interviews with five poets, Richard Wilbur, Stafford, Simpson, Wright, and Penn Warren. Not much else is new, though; the essays are dull, and the titles tell it all: "William Stafford: The Wilderness Quest", "Louis Simpson: In Search of the American Self", "James Wright: The Quest for Home". The interviews "updated". These are all top-calibre poets but no one really escapes the bland and predictable here. This is a lovely special interest only.

The privileged lonely line

D. W. Hartnett

JAMES MERRILL
Reclutative
Edited by J. D. McClatchy
202pp. San Francisco: North Point Press.
\$12.50.
0865472556

The two volumes of verse which James Merrill published in 1982—*From the First Nine* and *The Changing Light at Sandover*—constitute his Collected Poems. Now, four years later, comes *Reclutative*, the Collected Prose. J. D. McClatchy has assembled and lightly edited what was hitherto only accessible in back issues of journals and defunct little magazines. Here, in all the miscellaneous prose a reader of Merrill could want.

There is much here to enjoy. "Acoustical Chambers" travels through Merrill's privileged yet lonely childhood, treating us en route to vivid thumbnail sketches of "Mademoiselle"—the governess familiar to readers of that extraordinary poem of memory and forgetting, "Lost in Translation"—and the poet's own father, an alarming combination, as "Yannina" suggests, of the tyrannical and the indulgent. Here too are stories like "Driver", combining his semi-allegorical treatment of the poetic quest with an early adumbration of the occult; and "Peru: the Landscape Game", in which a minutely evoked landscape is weirdly re-absorbed into the workings of the imagination, a process typical of the later poetry. "The Beaten Path" evokes a youthful trip to the Far East with an attentiveness reminiscent of Witter Bynner's oriental translations, while "Notes on Corot" reads like a small-scale version of Proust's confrontation with the Vinetuil sonata—the writer tries to grapple directly with a non-verbal medium but has to surrender to the serpentine approximations of language.

In his foreword, Merrill affects an impatience with prose: "I persist in seeing it as a mildly nightmarish medium, to which there is no end . . . With prose, as I saw it, the aria never came. All was recitative . . ." Yet, as the operatic metaphor acknowledges, this antagonism presupposes a mutual reliance between poetry and prose. The ideal poetry, "durchkomponiert" according to the best post-Wagnerian models, remains unattainable. As Auden remarks in "The Dyer's Hand": "A purely poetic language would be unlearnable, a purely prosaic not worth learning." In fact, Merrill's poetry has been constantly nourished by prose. *The (Distant) Notebook's* revisionary textures and unstable authorial persona lead directly to *The Changing Light at Sandover's* babel of supernatural and human voices; while one has only to study the way memory operates in "The Book of Ephraim" to realize that Proust has been, as Merrill admits, his greatest influence. These debts to the world of prose point to a profounder commitment. As Merrill's poetry has become more concerned with the visionary, it has relied increasingly on the mundane, incorporating both domestic subject matter and the nuances of everyday speech. His best work focuses on a point where prose and the prosaic rub shoulders with an epiphanic lyricism.

This brings us up against a perennial theme: the nature of the poet's relationship with a world "out there". At the heart of this volume there are three essays/reviews and seven interviews (like Nabokov, Merrill composes his answers) which hover obsessively over this shadowy terrain. Merrill has frequently been accused of wilful hermeticism in his poetry (a cross example is the now infamous New York Times leader which criticized the Bollingen Foundation for awarding its poetry prize to so private a poet). For Merrill, privacy has always been an expansion of possibilities, seldom a retreat. Here he broods on writers who have dealt with the public worlds of politics and history by absorbing them into privacy. Paraphrasing Marguerite Yourcenar, he notes that Cavafy's "historical poems are intimate, just as all the intimate poems are historical". Again, he praises Elizabeth Bishop's poem "12 O'Clock News" for avoiding the "megalomania" of the Lowell generation while opening up "ironies that reach from the Ivory Tower to the Oval Office".

All these judgments reflect on Merrill's own

evasive brand of poetic autobiography. As he tells Donald Sheehon, confessional writing "is a literary convention like any other, the problem being to make it sound as if it were true". This perception grows out of a trust in discontinuity. For it is precisely those elements which get "lost" in the "translation" from life to art whose ghostly presence ensures autobiographical objectivity. The essays on Derrida and Cavafy pinpoint in both poets a refusal to make connections which mirrors Merrill's own. As he remarks to David Kalstone: "I was trying [in 'Yannina'] for an intimacy of tone, not of content." This should be glossed by the neat reversal of W. C. Williams's famous dictum in the essay on the French poet Francis Ponge: "No thoughts, then, but in things? . . . no things but in thoughts." The real world disappears behind the phrasing of a time. But that phrasing is always dependent on the prosaic and partially buried text of experience.

Acceptance of this paradox has enabled Merrill to be more richly oblique than any rawly confessional stance would allow, yet bolder in his use of private material. His mature work doesn't just deal with history and politics but with the cosmos as well. However, as he remarks in the interview with McClatchy, poems, even those of the most savage incandescence, can't deal frontally with such huge, urgent subjects without sounding grumpy or doted when they should still be in their prime. So my parents' divorce dramatized on a human scale a subject that couldn't have been handled otherwise. . . . You [the poet] don't see eternity except in a grain of sand, or history except at the family dinner table.

This book allows us to glimpse what lies behind this peculiar melding of apocalypse and domesticity. Here are some of the experiences and opinions which elsewhere have dissolved in air's "dry hell / Of volatile synthetic solvents". Their recitative may be incidental to the era of poetry, but it issues from the same opera. As Merrill reminds us: "The poet isn't always the hero of a movie who does this, does that. He is a man choosing the words he lives by."

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At the other end of travel

John Clute

MARIANNE WIGGINS
Herself in Love
184pp. Collins. £9.95.
0002231476

In the longest and loosest of the stories collected in *Herself in Love*, a young married man flees westward across contemporary America by old-fashioned train, only to find that the end of his journey in Los Angeles is also the end of his tether. There is no wilderness to hide in. He boards the next train back to New York. But "Gandy Dancing" ends before its failed Huckleberry Finn reaches home again, where he must begin to live out the consequences of his doomed fugue, and that may be the reason why this story, despite its dark felicitous of observation and its loving knowledge of the terminal days of Amtrak, lacks the touchy complexity of Marianne Wiggins's best work.

The best and most exultant stories in this fine book deal with survivors at the other end of travel, men and women whose moment of significant journeying has passed. Most of Wiggins's protagonists are internally exiled,

and several of them are literal expatriates. The author is herself an American living in England, and a vivid sense of the tightrope-walk of exile focuses the sharpest of her tales. Deise, spiky, guarded and extremely competent, these tales speak in barbed, self-sufficient rhythms of making a life in strange surroundings. This alienated territory may be England for an American, as in "Herself in Love", or old age for a passionate heart, as in "Among the Impressionists" or "Ridin' up Front with Carl and Marl", but displacement is always central.

There can be no avoiding the sense that there is something bleak and chilling about the estrangement that moulds these expatriate lives. At the same time, though none of the stories in *Herself in Love* could be described as markedly joyous, an almost ribald bravery and grace does infuse Wiggins's hard-etched portraits. Her protagonists dive into their loves and jealousies, and succumb to the stranglehold of passion, with a defiant *sprezzatura* that helps make reading her remarkable stories a decidedly bracing experience. This is an intensely active book.

At times it is too active. There are moments of pugacious overwriting; the narrative pre-

sense is applied too facetiously and too often, and becomes a kind of stylistic bludgeon quite unsuited to the complex patterns of a story like "Ridin' up Front with Carl and Marl", at times the urge to create tales of a self-sufficient knottedness, or of a sleight-of-hand virtuosity that denudes re-reading without necessarily rewarding it. But these are cavils. "Stonewall Jackson's Wife" is one of the finest ghost stories of recent years, not only a technical triumph but a vision of the family, of love and solitude, and of the milieu of the American Civil War, whose difficulty is absolutely essential to the reality conveyed. "3 Geniuses" may be too knotty, but on reflection unfolds into a sequence of parables whose implications swell nobly in the mind. "The Gentleman Arm", a monitory tale of exile and of the cost of agency, becomes, in its brilliant final paragraphs, a quiet but deeply chastening statement of our shared human condition. "Herself in Love" is desperately and comically acute. Though she has published three novels (*Separate Check*, 1984, is available in paperback in the United Kingdom), this is Marianne Wiggins's first collection of stories; it has presence, weight and toughness, and is likely to endure.

Savoury's organ

Christopher Hawtree

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE
Picture Palace
206pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £9.95.
0297 790390

No articles written, no money earned, but 50 pages of the novel are done. This is the first time that I have been really sure that something I was writing was first-rate. I do a piece of the book and it seems to me so good that I'm half-delirious with happiness.

Malcolm Muggeridge recorded in his dirty fifty-five years and innumerable articles ago. Such joy came with being ensconced in a Moscow suburb and at work on a novel about a Manchester newspaper. "And then after a while", he continues, "looking back I'm more doubtful. Is it so good?" A hope that "Old Savory [sic] with his moods is a fascinating character. His death - writing a New Year letter - will be magnificent." And, a few sentences on, "most of what I have done will stand. The parallel between Savory and C. P. Scott is very close. I fear it may be unsafe. But can't be helped."

Turned down by Putnam and by an equally nervous Rupert Hart-Davis at Cape, *Picture Palace* (as it was later "vilely renamed") was accepted by Douglas Jerrold at Eyre and Spottiswoode, and was to have been published on September 28, 1934. By which time, Muggeridge, "singularly uninterested, unrelated" at this event, was on a steamer bound for India and the assistant editorship of the Calcutta *Statesman*, a period which was to be made more the happier by a rash contract for a book on Samuel Butler. Telegrams informed him of the fiction's regress: its withdrawal had become necessary, and only if Muggeridge were able to wire £2,000 to fight the case could the publisher

avoid having to settle out of court. "No living person comes in the book", Muggeridge had told himself in Russia, almost wilfully ignoring the seedy atmosphere which surrounded his depiction of the sensitive *Manchester Guardian*, an organ apparently living off the proceeds of a down-market evening sister-paper.

It would hardly be fair to pluck Muggeridge's remark out of context and apply it now that *Picture Palace* has been reissued as something of a curiosity (extracts - though the publisher forbears to mention it - were printed in the *New Statesman* some fifteen years ago). "As a work of fiction it cannot be said to be a success", comments Muggeridge's biographer Richard Ingrams in a short introduction. The death of old Savory, done pungently enough, is not exactly magnificent; in any case, this matter of leader-writing technique has been pre-empted by the classic account, in *The Green Sheik*, of Muggeridge's own first attempt at the genre, from ascertaining which line one should adopt to a flourish culled from the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*.

Such satire, depending as it does on a good deal too much prior knowledge on the reader's part, hardly makes for a *Scoop* or a *Towards the End of the Morning*; it has more in common with Wyndham Lewis's similarly suppressed *The Roaring Queen*. Where it does succeed is as an autobiographical variant (rather as Leonard Woolf's *The Wise Virgins* did), one which shows a man of decided views about others but unsure of himself. Not only does the familiar, wracked sense of a quest bring one Pettygreave and his wife, Gertrude, to life, it also calls to mind Blake and the danger of building "a Hell in Heaven's despite". Meanwhile, silent as autobiography, diary and Ingrams's introduction are, one would like to know why *Time of Life* - the title under which Muggeridge had originally hoped to publish the novel - has not been restored.

Exile's return

Antony Beevor

DOUGLAS DAY
Journey of the Wolf
256pp. Reinhardt. £10.95.
0370 310640

A certain self-consciousness affects some English-speaking writers when they set a novel entirely in a foreign country. Perhaps afraid of their presumption, they feel obliged to demonstrate a knowledge of what they are writing about. Often, this takes the form of frequent and colourful interjections in the local language, which then requires simultaneous translation like a language cassette.

It is a pity that Douglas Day should spoil the best part of this, his first novel, in just such a way. One can hardly complain about the occasional *Hombre!*; and when an important word or phrase has an untranslatable flavour, to slip in the original can sometimes be a great advantage. But to sprinkle the text compulsively soon becomes counter-productive, even irritating.

Day's taciturn protagonist, Sebastián Rosales, is a Spaniard of the Republican diaspora, one of the many to fight in the *Maquis* during the Second World War. He had left his village at the age of seventeen on the outbreak of the Civil War and fought all the way through. In 1973, following a quarrel with his wife in southern France, he sets out on foot, without money and without papers, to return to his birthplace in the mountains south of Granada after thirty-four years of exile.

His roundabout route from Navarre takes in Guadalupe, Belchite and Teruel, the sites of the main battles in Aragón, all of which Rosales experienced: this rather obvious device enabling the author to include chunks of flashback and period history. These sections are the least convincing in the book, and not just because of the number of minor historical errors or improbabilities. The characters become stereotypes, and several of the eyewitness vignettes are already familiar - for example the description of the flight from Málaga, and the rescue of refugees on the French frontier pressing over the state of refugees to make them drop their earthly earth; they are taking into exile.

The young Rosales's ubiquitous role in the war, although not impossible, does not lend him credibility. And at times there is that uneasy tone - factual, portentous and down to earth - so often found in a novel by a journalist.

But the old Rosales is a different matter. Here, the writing gives the impression that the author is on home ground. In his description of the veteran's return to Andalusia - sleeping rough, hitching lifts, encountering both rudeness and unexpected kindness - Day has created a memorable worm's-eye view of Spain's jerry-built modernization under Franco. Even if his character is, as one suspects, partly inspired by Francisco Pérez López's *A Guerrilla Diary of the Spanish Civil War* (1972), the achievement here is still considerable; Day manages to be both sympathetic and unsentimental. The ending, however, has an unfortunate whiff of Hemingway at his macho, mawkish worst.

Crime file

JOHN MALCOLM
Gothic Pursuit
163pp. Collins. £8.95.
0 00 232113 0

John Malcolm's thrillers about Tim Simpson, who runs the art investment fund at White's merchant bank, are coming to have a pleasingly ritualistic quality. Tim gets wind of a hidden art treasure, starts to search for it, and finds a body, undetected, he continues, finds another body and finally, after a reasonably violent confrontation with the villa, emerges triumphant with the work of art; the whole being accompanied by a gloomy chorus of disapprobation from his girlfriend Sue and policeman Nobby Roberts, Tim's old rugby-playing friend from Cambridge. This time, in his fifth adventure, Tim's after a piece of furniture designed by the nineteenth-century architect Richard Norman Shaw. As usual, the capework is deft and professional. In the extreme, and, as usual, Tim reveals how he has matured into a knowledgeable art historian as he regurgitates a flood of fascinating information, over his nose of refugees to make them drop their earthly earth; they are taking into exile.

Canned apocalypse

Jenny Abbott

SALLY EMERSON
Fire Child
185pp. Michael Joseph. £9.95.
07184 2832 X

In Sally Emerson's first novel, *Second Sight*, the young heroine retreats into an imaginary world, unable to cope with a confusing present. Still fascinated by the private worlds people inhabit, Emerson goes much further in *Fire Child*. By telling the story through the successive diary entries of two disturbed adolescents, she creates a London in which elemental forces seem to be at work, both in the minds of the two young lovers and beyond. Evil has come to Highbury.

The jumpy, almost histrionic tone of the novel initially suggests that Emerson wants to show us how and why people become disconnected from reality, how the surfaces of everyday life become so overcrowded and so overbearing that a cruel dislocation takes place. In fact her interests lie elsewhere. *Fire Child* is more allegory than psychological drama. The two main characters are already in convenient definable states of psychosis when the novel opens, and - from what they reveal of their pasts - always have been.

Martin is the young pyromaniac of the title. He discovered his fascination with fire at the age of six, when he burnt down his uncle's garden shed. Several years later he does the same to the family home. Fire is "the only possible creation", the only way of reminding everyone how insignificant human life is. Martin also broods on the end of the world: not a slow entropic demise but a sudden return to the "blackness that lies at the end of all things and at the beginning". His soul-mate Tessa also discovered her peculiar power at an early age: a sexual attractiveness which promises men something "darker and more terrible and more beautiful" than they have ever experienced.

While two of her lovers die tormented by her power - one "literally screwed to death" - and a third has a nervous breakdown, she remains cold and manipulative.

She and Martin speak the same cruel language, and the attraction when they meet is spontaneous. Martin sees her as his other self, the "girl who asks me to climb down the rope of her hair into hell", and each achieves a regenerated sense of power from the relationship. Tessa is able to exact revenge on Alexander, the ex-lover who inadvertently killed her father, and Martin destroys the last reminders of life before Tessa, to concentrate on a future in which no one will be able to resist them. Through the "savagery" of their love-making, the fire child and the ice maiden create something "which will last far ever".

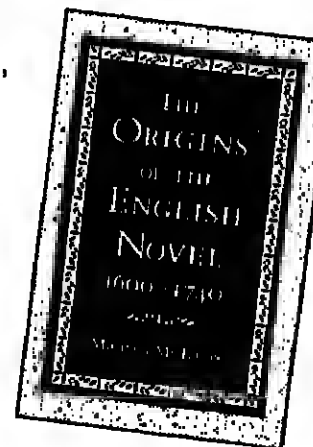
Fire Child has the dimensions of a gothic nightmare, but its landscape is decidedly suburban. Martin, although he has a worryingly bright political career ahead, is a supermarket stacker, and Tessa an estate agent's clerk. Their diaries must bear the weight of revealing not only their complicated inner lives but the minutiae of their day-to-day existence, and this is the novel's major drawback: there is no real differentiation of tone and no external point of reference. Emerson tries to give us a sense of Martin's calculating evil, but has to do so in the same voice that informs us that he once built a huge pyramid out of special-offer tins of grapefruit.

This, along with a frustratingly murky symbolism (fire, ice, flood and void), makes a potentially strong story just a little melodramatic. Highbury is probably not the enstee of places to transform into a land of preternatural forces, but Tessa and Martin never really strike us as the couple to do it, no matter how "inextricably involved" with the end of the world they think they are. Eventually their pretensions become irritating, and a prose style obviously intended to shock, but which succeeds only in amusing, does nothing to offset this. *Fire Child* keeps missing its mark.

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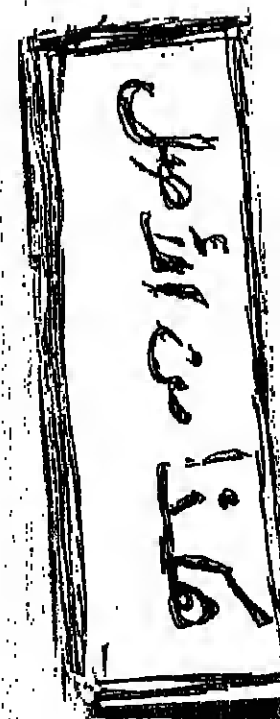
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Empire style

Richard Krautholmer

CHARLES B. MCCLENDON
The Imperial Abbey of Farfa: Architectural
currents of the early Middle Ages
197pp. Yale University Press. £30.
0300333338

The ruins of the abbey of Farfa are about an hour's drive north of Rome. One of the great convents of Europe in the early Middle Ages, its history is well documented by chroniclers from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. Founded by Thomas de Maurienne late in the seventh century, it was closely linked from the outset first to the Frankish rulers, then to the Carolingian, Ottonian and Salian emperors. Starting in the ninth century, it was a *Reichs-abbey*, an Imperial abbey, immediately dependent on the Empire, rather than being under papal jurisdiction, and hence a key stronghold in the warfare between emperors and popes raging through the early Middle Ages.

Today, little remains of the medieval abbey church, in part below, in part outside its Renaissance successor: a short stretch of nave wall to the north; a stretch of mosaic pavement, likewise running east and west; to the west, outside the Renaissance church, the walls of a continuous transept, short and deep; finally, its apse and, below it, an annular crypt, which have been excavated by Charles B. McClendon in co-operation with the British School at Rome and its then director, David Whitehouse, and with the support of both British and American institutions. These excavations, in three successive campaigns, have also brought to light elements of the medieval convent: a cloister-like "atrium" behind the apse, set off from it by a curved wall, serving as a burial ground; and slightly south, a building enclosing a chapel. None of the walls so far described, inside and to the west of the Renaissance church, rises, if at all, more than a

couple of feet above ground. Except, that is, a huge entrance tower of late medieval date. But on the opposite flank of the Renaissance church, rises the east end of the medieval abbey church: the piers of a crossing, not quite axial with the remains of the nave; north of it, a massive, tall bell-tower; and, projecting east, a deep and high square "presbytery" — why not call it a square apse?

McClendon has carefully researched and describes in detail all these remains, taking into consideration cautiously, and never without a caveat, findings reported by earlier students of the site or recorded in photographs of haphazard digging — foundation walls and the like. Based on this archaeological evidence and the supporting written sources, he has been able to unravel the building history of the

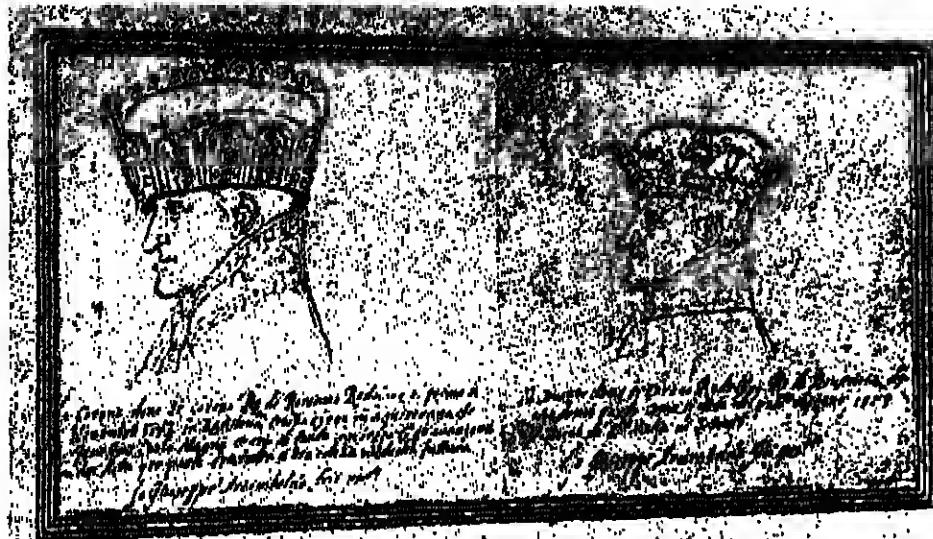
church and to present its successive phases of construction both by word and by survey plans, elevations, and reconstruction drawings. This solid foundation enables him to place the abbey church of Farfa as it presented itself successively in the eighth, the ninth and the eleventh centuries into the picture of contemporary architecture in Western Europe.

The first major result of McClendon's research is indeed that, contrary to former belief, the remains, rather than being uniformly of Carolingian date, belong to a sequence of structures, different in plan and date. A first church, an aisleless nave, can be safely dated to the eighth or the late seventh century. This, whether or not built by Thomas de Maurienne, the convent's founder, was thoroughly remodelled by Abbot Sighardus in 830–42 when the

axis was reversed. Two hundred years later, in a second major rebuilding, the axis was reversed again; and the church became double-headed, with both eastern and western choirs and altars; but the east end, with its massing of volumes and the tall towers, dominated the design.

While the masonry technique and some of the details throughout this succession of churches are local or linked to nearby models, architects and patrons at Farfa from the outset looked far afield for their church plans and other features. Aisleless churches flanked by burial chambers in pre-Carolingian Europe were widespread, from Angers to Mistail in the Grisons and from Canterbury to Carintha and south-east into the mountains of western Serbia and Montenegro. Rare as it is in Italy, the type may have been brought to Farfa by Thomas de Maurienne from his native Savoy. In planning the second church, Abbot Sighardus clearly turned to Rome, whence relics of Roman saints were brought to safety from the abandoned catacombs to be housed in the annular crypt. For the "third church", the towered east end, the architect again drew on faraway sources: the abbey churches and cathedrals built from the Rhineland to Lorraine by the Salian emperors in the first half of the eleventh century — Echternach, St Maximin at Trier, Speyer, and in Piedmont (then closely linked to the Empire), Aosta, Ivrea. By and large, then, Farfa, throughout its great time, the early Middle Ages, maintains strong links beyond the Alps to the core of the Empire. Its architecture reflects its policy as a *Reichsabbey*.

It is a pity that the publishers, in producing the book, have failed to live up to the high standards set by the author in preparing it. A large part of the illustrations, except line drawings, are practically illegible blobs of black, grey and startling white. What could have been the model of a monograph in architectural history has been deprived by the publisher of an essential element, good illustrations.



Giuseppe Arcimboldo's profiles of Rudolf II. Arcimboldo's autograph dedications state that on the left Rudolf wears the crown with which he was crowned King of Rome in Ratisbon on November 1, 1575, on the right he wears that with which he was crowned King of Bohemia earlier in the year. They are taken from *The Arcimboldo Effect* (402pp. Thames and Hudson. Paperback, £32.05/00 27471 1), to be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

Treasures in context

Giles Robertson

RONA GOFFEN
Pietà and Patronage in Renaissance Venice:
Bellini, Titian, and the Franciscans
285pp. Yale University Press. £30.
0300094555

Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, the mother church of the Franciscans, remains the greatest treasury of the religious art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Venice. It contains one of the finest of Giovanni Bellini's altarpieces and two of Titian's in their original frames and settings, albeit with a degree of modern illumination which would have astonished the painters. It is not only visually that these works remain in context, they are also constituent parts of a spiritual organism which still functions today. The elucidation of this spiritual context and the exposition of the complex meanings which these altarpieces may have been intended to convey is the purpose of Rona Goffen's study. She belongs to the school of maximal interpretation where every element in the painting is given a precise meaning. We are to some extent left with the question of who devised these coded messages: patron, clergy or the artist? It is hard to know if and how contemporary viewers understood them.

Not all the interpretations that Professor Goffen offers are equally convincing. We are told that the piecing of the Virgin above the side saints in Bellini's triptych is symbolic of the Immaculate Conception; but this is certainly not always so, since Bellini first introduced this feature into his work (as well as perhaps to Venetian painting) in his altarpiece for SS Giovanni e Paolo, the mother church of the Dominicans who were violent opponents of the doctrine. We are also told that the dedication of this altar must have been to the Immacolata, because the Latin inscription in the mosaic of the apse in the painting is a quotation from the Office of the Immaculate Conception by Leonardo Nogarola printed in Venice in 1478, but this can hardly be the case since it is in the form of two hexameters, though it may incorporate phraseology from the Office.

Goffen gives us much valuable information about the patronage of these altarpieces. Bellini's triptych was commissioned by Benedetto Pesaro and his brothers, of the San Benedetto branch of the family, while Titian's altarpiece in the nave was commissioned some thirty years later by Jacopo Pesaro, of the del Carro branch. Jacopo had served under his cousin Benedetto, in command of twenty papal galleys, at the capture of Santa Meura from the Turks in 1502, and considered that his services had not been adequately acknowledged. His altarpiece is clearly designed to assert his claim to have been the architect of that victory. Though the dedication of the altar is to the Immaculate Conception this is essentially a crusading manifesto, with the "in hoc signo" of the great Cross at the summit of the picture. If we accept the Immaculatus interpretation of the giant columns, which have been shown to represent a late modification of the design of the picture, we may wonder whether their introduction was partly dictated by criticism from the clergy that the dedication of the altar to the Immacolata had not been sufficiently stressed.

The crowning glory of the church is Titian's "Assumption" over the high altar, and one has only to read the muted praise accorded to it by nineteenth-century critics, who knew it during its century of exile in the galleries of the Accademia, to appreciate the importance of its physical context. Here again, in his spiritual exposition, Goffen seems to overstress the references to the Immaculate Conception. As this doctrine was passionately espoused by the Franciscans, references to it in any Marian context in a Franciscan church are not surprising, but here they are noticeably oblique, compared, for example, with those in Bellini's painting now in S. Pietro Martire at Murano.

Finally there is a discussion of the late "Pietà" in the Accademia, intended, so Rudolf tells us, for the altar in the Frari before which Titian wished to be buried, but which was never delivered to the church. This work is a wonderful summing up of Titian's achievement as a religious painter and this chapter forms a fitting conclusion to a book which enriches our appreciation of the works it discusses.

Sharing a new vision

Lauro Martines

GEORGE HOLMES
Florence, Rome and the Origins of the
Renaissance
273pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.
019 8225768

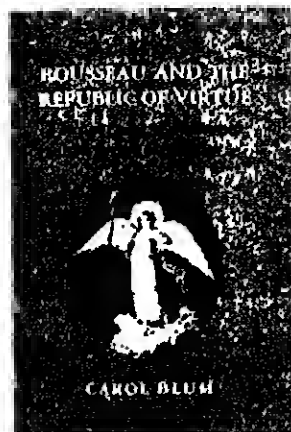
George Holmes contemplates the Italian Renaissance on artistic and literary "realism", which begins, he holds, with certain artists and poets of the late thirteenth century. The artists — Cavallini, Cimabue, Nicola Pisano — groped their way towards a sense of spatial and figural realism by imitating Roman classical models. With Dante's *Inferno* far in advance, the poets sought in their fictions to portray real men or new realities. Holmes sees realism as the standard for the Renaissance because it was to make for the triumphant, innovative line in the high culture of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. From Masaccio to Michelangelo, and from Boccaccio to Machiavelli, the new cultural ideal would seek the realistic representation of people in their world. The exclusive concern of *Florence, Rome and the Origins of the Renaissance* is, however, the "explosion" that took place around 1300, seen above all in the art of Dante and Giotto. Holmes provides chapters on political conflict (at Florence especially), on banking and industry at Florence and Siena, on the profoundity and Franciscan springs of popular piety, on papal and imperial politics in Tuscany, and on "Lay Thought at Florence". His general contention is that the rise of realism in literature and the visual arts had to do with the tenor of city life, but more specifically with the artistic patronage of two popes (Nicholas III and IV), with Florentine and Sienese contacts in Rome, and with "the world of Florentine speech and life which he [Dante] had known before 1302". We are not told, however, how exactly these occasions, or colluded with, the birth of realism. And so the gist of his argument is left hanging, for the analysis is not conducted along the boundaries between city life and art, or between society and letters. Instead, it is directed away from society to the art itself, to poetry.

Holmes is at his best when entertaining questions of connoisseurship, of the influence of one artist or poet on another, or of the early versus the late Dante. Whatever the novelist's push of politics and social organization in Florence, realism in Italian art is born, for Holmes, from the effort to imitate classical models, not from changes in outlook fomented by the intensity of urban life in Tuscany. Similarly, in grappling with Dante's poetry, the author concentrates on formal and biographical concerns, so that when indeed he finds some link there with the world, he loses its public-social aspect by taking it as matter in Dante's unique biography. He does not examine the finding — for example, the realism of certain episodes in the *Inferno* — in the light of new stresses also present in other poets and writers. If Dante and Giotto truly share a new vision of men, as Holmes suggests, then the vital origins of this bonding cannot be in distant Rome, papal or classical; they must be in the structuring values, pragmatic and materialistic, of the dominant groups in Florence.

The virtues of this book are in its reworking of material not available in English. This includes most of what Holmes has to say about political strife, the Tuscan economy, Florentine supremacy in Tuscany, and Tuscan foreign and commercial relations. There is a notable freshness and sparkle in his chapters on popular religious feeling, on the impact of St Francis, and on the movement of ideas into Florence. Averroistic Aristotelianism, with its denial of personal immortality, enters the city in the intellectual baggage of physicians trained at Bologna. Parisian scholasticism arrives with friars and clerics. And Holmes offers us snapshots of the renowned temple saints of thirteenth and fourteenth-century Italy. But I cannot persuade myself that these women were models for the poets of "the sweet new style": Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoia, Dante, and others. The semi-angelic lady of their verse is less a religious exemplar than a moral, social and aesthetic ideal, serving to help set them apart from the coarse herd of common men. Cavalcanti would have considered the slightly womanly of his day too inelegant and physical for his imagistic purposes.

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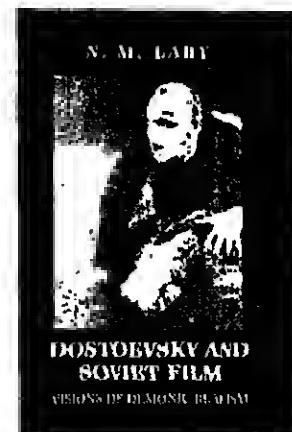


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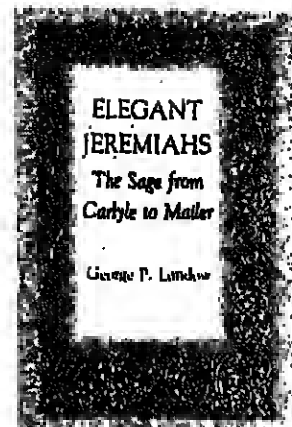


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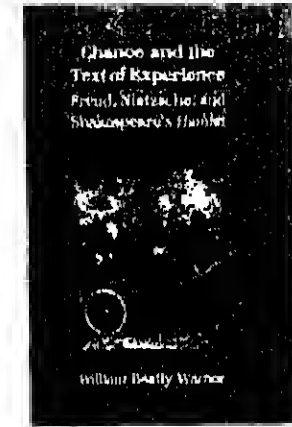
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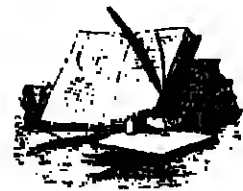
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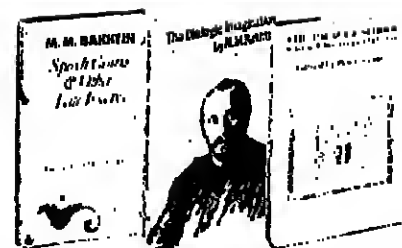
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